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METHODISM IN THE MODERN WORLD

METHODISM IN THE MODERN WORLD

BY

MEMBERS OF THE METHODIST CHURCHES

EDITED BY

J. SCOTT LIDGETT, M.A., D.D.

AND

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PREFACE

It is not necessary to use many words in introducing this volume of essays and explaining its object. Both the project and, in the main, the plan are due to the Rev. Bryan H. Reed, B.D. He also secured most of the writers and allotted their subjects to them. At a subsequent stage Mr. Reed joined with others in urging me to undertake the responsibility of editing the book, and he has given me his assistance in doing so. To him, therefore, the credit belongs.

The approach of Methodist Union makes the production of this volume particularly timely. The advocates of this Union have never made mere amalgamation of the three Churches, with the constitutional changes that are involved for each of them, an end in itself. They have sought Union in the belief that thereby Methodism would make its distinctive contribution, both to the Universal Church of Christ, and to the advancement of the Kingdom of God, more effective. It is hoped that a great spiritual influence will precede, accompany, and cement the impending ecclesiastical changes. Yet organization, emotion, and even enthusiasm are alike and all together insufficient to fulfil this expectation. There must be evidence of both community and continuity of belief throughout the entire Church. There must also be such fidelity to the ideals and standards of the past as to enable the united Church to meet the challenge of the modern world with a faith that, instead of deserting or ignoring the past, invigorates it by newness of life. It is as a demonstration and as an instrument of this community and continuity, of this fidelity and vitality, that this book must be judged.

The writers of these articles may be taken as fairly

representing the outlook of the respective communions to which they belong. Yet the result shows at once fundamental unity and common loyalty to the evangelical tradition, the specific ' witness,' and the spiritual experience for which Methodism has stood from the first. A series of articles such as this cannot cover the entire ground of Christian belief and activity. There are gaps here and there; some subjects have not been treated, others have been only incidentally referred to and assumed as the underlying basis upon which all the writers have built. In the practical sphere, the fact that the proposed reunion is that of British Methodism has so limited the scope of the volume that the history and achievements of American Methodism have lain outside its range. Only slight reference has been possible to the relationship of Methodism to the Universal Church, and, in the concluding article, to the belief that Methodist Union, in conjunction with similar movements, may become an earnest of the eventual reunion of Christendom, when ' truth, as truth is in Jesus,' shall be more adequately realized by all branches of the Christian Church. Sufficient has been written, however, to show that the ' one body ' of reunited Methodism will be animated by ' one spirit,' and it is in fervent prayer for this great consummation that this volume is issued. May it serve the purpose for which it has been undertaken!

J. Scott Lidgett.

Introductory

THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF METHODISM

I

THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF METHODISM

By William T. A. Barber, M.A., D.D.

When the eighteenth century dawned on England the sun rose on a disillusioned and yawning race.

The preceding generations had fought each other with intensity, and there had been wreckage of Throne and change of Church. Men had felt so deeply that they had risked everything to establish what they considered to be righteousness. The Puritans, who had become dominant, drew the bow too tight; the great mass of the nation in sheer weariness turned back to the exiled House of Stuart. The tone of the restored Court was unashamedly vile, and the people followed into self-indulgence. England stirred itself again to refuse a Roman Catholic King, but after that fell back into a weary distaste for intensity of belief in anything. Moderation was the golden aim; acceptance of the established order the best duty. It was not worth while to aim at change; why not be content? Above all in religious matters, recently proved so explosively dangerous, let men avoid the fantastic. Why not be content with plain duty and leave to fanatics high talk about the ideal and the spiritual. 'Enthusiasm' was the *bête noire* of every ordinary citizen.

Religion, the root of all life, experienced the reaction most of all. Was anything worth while? Leadership in the Church lost by the extrusion of men who would give up their livings rather than violate conscience. Even Dissenters, under the sense of defeat, lost their warmth of perception of the spiritual. The tendency was to a

philosophic Deism and a thinly veiled Socinianism which glorified Common Sense and reduced the terms of the divine revealing to the limits of human comprehension. Thus the eighteenth century so claimed to be an age which gave a reason for the faith that was in it that Reason clipped Faith's wings and Faith, forced to walk on earth, was soon helplessly bemired and clogged.

Once again in history was exemplified the doctrine of 'The Remnant,' which had illuminated the sorrowful days of the Old Testament Church. When Elijah lamented that he alone was faithful to the truth, God pointed to the unknown seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. When the land was utterly desolate, Isaiah saw the stump of the oak that should put out new leaves and the Holy Seed should be the substance of it. When the nation was exiled, the hope was in the Remnant. Thus, too, in this age of calm reason, where the spiritual was being smothered, there were souls not a few that could not be content. The reign of Queen Anne was marked by many religious societies which linked men and women in joint endeavour, earnest devotion, and study of the Word. These were mostly within the Anglican Church, both the sections which to-day are called High and Low ; but there were also Moravian societies, and many godly Dissenters were included. He who would fix his eyes solely on the rationalizers of the age, and would ignore the hidden springs of earnest spiritual desires deep down in the nation's heart, would miss the real course of the river of life. The parsonage at Epworth, where Samuel and Susannah Wesley trained in godliness the numerous children born to them, was an epitome of the religious England of the day. Each of them was of aristocratic origin ; each of them had a father who for conscience' sake gave up a living and became a Dissenter ; each of them through conviction rejoined the Church of England. Their rigid training in self-restraint, love of learning, and cultivation of the soul was the product of Puritanism as well as Episcopacy. The spiritual insight and the shrewd

sagacity of the advice which both parents gave their sons in their youth, and which the mother gave in later years, show what fair roots there had been in what looked like arid soil. It was natural that, after the elder son Samuel had gained his degree at Oxford, the younger John and Charles should succeed him there, at the cost—alas, universal in that age—of the intellectual starvation of their sisters. Equally natural was it that their seriousness of aim in life should crystallize into the form of a religious society suited to University life. The Holy Club, methodizing time and effort in order to make the best and most of life, attracted more attention and ridicule than the Religious Societies in London and throughout the country because of the narrowness of the orbit at Oxford and because of youth's irresistible gaiety of satire and resentment of variation from ' good form.'

The older Universities have always been the foci of personal forces of thought and religion which have produced great orbits of social activity in widest areas of the realm. The eyes of the nation's leaders are always directed to these fountains of fresh young life, and, in religion as well as politics, experienced eyes watch for the appearance of the leaders of the future. Hence it was that the Wesleys had their share in Oglethorpe's great scheme in Georgia, where John worked through the sacerdotal crust of his academic training. He was a High Churchman in the true sense all his life; but it is astonishing how little we hear of priestly assumption after his return to England. His meeting with the Moravians had opened his eyes to new modes of religious life. In a certain sense Wesley's mind was truly scientific. He examined with calm but minute curiosity every new fact of experience. His method was rigidly inductive. When in the height of the storm at sea he found his German fellow passengers, men and women, joyously and fearlessly singing, he could not rest content till he found out the reason, though it took years to find it. When he failed so entirely with his colonial parishioners, he looked

earnestly into his own heart to see wherein the fault lay. He took up again the threads of English life, and naturally joined in the societies where he could meet men in earnest. Once more it was to his German friends that he owed the new light. Weary of his self-justifying course of punctilious duty, he was bidden by them to come to the full freedom of forgiving love, to the fountains springing up from the very Heart of God revealed in Christ, and was assured that faith could claim that freedom as the simple gift of God's grace. It was the words of Luther from the Great Reformation, read in the society in Fetter Lane, that unsealed the springing life of the Methodist Revival. First Charles, then John, Wesley realized the glorious simplicity and mighty power of Justification by Faith. Paul, Luther, Wesley—a living chain of witnesses—each spoke from a strangely warmed heart, and each called a world of brothers to realize that they were not servants, but sons. But what gaps there had been between the links! Each time the doctrine seemed new; and yet, unseen, there had always been the Remnant, the real saints. John Wesley had always desired a return to the primitive Church; at last he found it.

Later on he declared that his one object in religion up till then had been the saving of his own soul. Herein, as in the account of his conversion, he did injustice to himself; but in the warm certainties of the upspringing and overflowing grace of God in Christ his love instantly reached out its arms to others. The brothers sang together Charles's new hymn:

> Where shall my wondering soul begin?

Instantly there came home the truth taught him years before: the Bible knows nothing of a solitary religion. It was not very long before another hymn embalmed the Methodist result:

> O let me commend my Saviour to you.

A new missionary force was born.

Paul's familiar words, ' The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God ' burst into a sudden splendour which illuminated life. This new experience of the Witness of the Spirit was a seed in Wesley's orderly and logical and practical mind. Inevitably there gradually dawned the vision of a holiness in which he was to love the Lord his God with all his heart and mind and soul and strength and his neighbour as himself. A redeemed soul, conscious of its redemption and certain of its Saviour, sounded forth to the whole world in new harmony the old notes, too often muted in the past, of Justification by Faith, Christian Assurance, and Perfect Love. The issue was the unceasing and universal evangelism that was early Methodism.

The Wesleys were not alone in the experience. Under their preaching and Whitefield's many were brought into the light and gathered in the societies. But the dangers of Moravian ' stillness,' which travestied the belief in the Spirit's influences by advocating the intermission of all ' means,' the withdrawal from Sacrament and forms of worship, repelled John Wesley of the ordered mind and common sense. He separated from those at Fetter Lane and formed his own society at the Foundery, whose members were to be found all over London. Ere long the orthodox clergy took alarm. Above all they feared enthusiasm ; it was dangerous presumption of a man to say that he knew his sins forgiven. Pulpits were shut against the preachers. Whitefield, driven out at Bristol, preached to vast crowds in the open air. When he was unable to continue he appealed to Wesley to take his place. Sentiment and sense of order revolted from the idea. Yet he went, heard Whitefield, judged by the result—and ' consented to be more vile.' The greatest open-air preacher of English history had begun his work.

As a result, through the tireless journeys of half a century, a ' connexion ' of societies was spread through the whole land. On these societies was set the impress of the quiet, practical godliness of their leader. The core was

made up of ' bands ' of those who met in small numbers in most intimate communion, searching for Christian holiness. The anxious inquirers multiplied ; outside the bands were serious persons who ' desired to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins.' The members were expected to be regular at the ordinary means of grace in their churches in addition to attending the exhortations and devotions of the society, where they were led into the new freedom of the children of God.

It was all important that the new societies should justify themselves by the spotless personal reputation of their members. The due oversight of the growing numbers was a difficult problem to solve. It was by a sort of accident that the Methodist Class Meeting came into being. The use of the accident is so characteristic that the story is worth re-telling. The New House in Bristol needed funds. One man suggested that each should contribute a penny a week, and promised to be responsible for the gifts of twelve, whom he promised to see regularly. The idea was accepted, and its use spread rapidly elsewhere. The more intimate knowledge thus gained soon suggested to Wesley's wide-awake mind that he had here found a band of assistant pastors. Ere long the members everywhere were brought each week to a meeting for mutual help and godly experience under the charge of a Leader, so that the disorderly were rebuked or excluded, the weak strengthened, and the immature developed. Thus as a by-product of a plan for finance was born the Methodist Class Meeting, at its best surely the most perfect expression of Christian fellowship.

The spontaneity of response as the Wesleys and a few others spread their journeys over England suggests two things. Firstly, there were certainly many eagerly ready for a higher spiritual life. Secondly, the good news was strangely effective in striking conscience and heart in many who had been well-nigh heathen. Sometimes, as in Leeds, a society already formed received Wesley and

bodily joined his 'Connexion'; more frequently it was, as in the journeys of Paul, that individuals were awakened and left as centres of infant spiritual communities. Soon some, from expressing their experience in their meetings, developed into more formal instructors and exhorters. Cennick at Kingswood seems to have been the first lay preacher. Another story is familiar. During Wesley's absence from the Foundery, Maxfield spoke with profit to the society. When the Leader, aghast at the news, hurried back to stop it, his saintly old mother, now a member of his home, warned him not to fight against God, as the young man was as truly called to preach as he himself was. Wesley heard, judged, was convinced, agreed. So the Methodist lay preachers came to be.

It was always the same. Wesley was essentially what to-day would be called a Pragmatist. Initially he had strong prejudices, but he was always ready to try experiments and always open to conviction if they succeeded. Prejudices were frankly laid aside, practical needs found practical solutions, and gradually there emerged what he rightly recognized as a copy of early Christian institutions.

It was in 1744 that the first Conference was held, when six clergymen and four laymen met at Wesley's invitation to talk over the spiritual methods and facts of the united societies. Ever since 1765 each year have been published '*Minutes of Several Conversations at the Yearly Conference of the People called Methodists*, in the Connexion established by the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.'

As the needs of ministration became more urgent, laymen responded to Wesley's call, left their worldly business, and became 'travelling preachers' on the rounds which he established. When buildings were erected, they were vested in trustees for the use of the societies. The form of the deeds was carefully considered so as to ensure that these trustees should not be able to carry off the property nor to divert it from Methodist use. It was only after nearly a century that a model deed was

finally settled which satisfactorily summed up the experience of what was needed. Thus the business framework of what was a constantly expanding concern was constructed piecemeal according to need. Like the British Constitution, it gradually grew by experiment and practice. The 'round' of the travelling preacher led to the formation of 'circuits,' which included a number of smaller places attached to a stronger central church and formed one financial and spiritual unit. The individual church had its Leaders' Meeting, which was the spiritual and disciplinary authority. All these were joined together with the trustees and others in the Quarterly Meeting for the general management of the whole circuit. Each circuit was assigned to an 'assistant' of Wesley's, who grew into the Superintendent, responsible for the work of colleagues and of local preachers not travelling beyond the bounds of their own circuits. From the first the assistant was expected to watch over the discipline of the society, to exclude those who did not keep the rules or who lived disorderly. The right of nomination of the various officers was reserved to the Superintendent, while the election depended on the meetings. It is necessary to mention, in bare outline at any rate, the arrangements for the work which gradually formed the careful and complete Methodist polity, since later on it was differences of view on this subject that led to division.

It is more interesting to picture the heroic men who tramped and rode along muddy by-ways, sparely fed, unpaid, poorly clad, in order to declare the glorious news that had made them free and glad. Persecution was their frequent experience; they often suffered violence from the rabble, frequently at the instigation of 'gentry,' and even clergy. Brutality directed against men and women and destruction of property were patiently accepted; they bore on their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus. Once more history repeated itself; the more they suffered the more men were drawn to them.

It is no surprise to those who have inherited the teaching

of Perfect Love to find that Wesley and his followers were noted for their activity in all manner of social work and help. In fact, most of the benevolent and religious agencies which characterize modern Christianity can be traced back to the Evangelical movement. Here were found the principles which made the slave trade impossible. Very early the needs of poorer members of the society were helped by gifts of clothes, money, and employment, and by sick visitation. For the relief of the outside poor there was formed by Wesley and Adam Clarke a Strangers' Friend Society, which has been the model for many others. Wesley was active in founding dispensary help for the needy. Day and Sunday schools and an orphanage were started by Methodist energy, and popular literature was issued for the multitude. It was impossible to seek to love God with all the heart without going on to love the neighbour as oneself. Each year the Conference, composed of those preachers whom Wesley invited, passed in review what had happened. How rapid the growth was may be understood by the following figures of membership during the century.

Year	1744 (first Conference)	1775	1786	1798 (after division)
No. of Members	2,000 (London alone)	38,145	58,150	101,682

As the Founder grew old it was clearly necessary to think of the future when he should pass away. Wesley was a benevolent autocrat, always ready to consult and consider, but finally imposing his own will. Everything was arranged, built, settled, for the uses of the 'Conference.' The need became urgent for defining the meaning of the term, and in 1784 Wesley prepared and enrolled in the High Court of Chancery a 'Deed of Declaration and Establishment of the People called Methodists,' in which he declared the Conference to be a hundred of the preachers named in the Deed, with a settled method of filling up the vacancies.

The hundred chosen were from all ranks of seniority, one of them having been 'in full Connexion' for only a single year. It is not wonderful that there was much soreness of feeling at the next Conference. Assurance that no superiority was intended or would be claimed tided over the difficulty. One or two of the preachers retired hurt, and it must be remembered that even in Wesley's day there were from time to time instances of differences of opinion and partings. While Methodism was simply a 'connexion' of societies, such differences and partings could not be thought of as schism; they were simply the natural solution of the varieties inherent in human nature.

In Wesley's mind his preachers were simply laymen, and when the English Bishops refused to ordain some of these to minister to the separated States of America, he ordained Coke as Superintendent. By him Asbury was ordained Bishop, whence issued the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church of America. Similarly when the need arose he ordained a few for Scotland, and even in England. The rule still was that Methodist services were not to be held at the same hours as those of the Church of England, but the exceptions were growingly more numerous. Wesley continued to assert that while he lived there would be no separation, but for years before his death the question of the Sacraments and the services during Church hours had been repeatedly discussed.

His death, March 2, 1791, necessarily brought a time of crisis. Most societies, and, it is interesting to record, the majority of the preachers, desired to follow the old plan; but many had been converted under the preachers, had been repelled from the Lord's Table, like the saintly Mrs. Fletcher, and desired the Holy Communion. It was impossible to lead them back to the Church. The views of both sides were actively canvassed during four months before Conference, which discreetly and ambiguously decided, 'We will follow strictly the plan Mr. Wesley left

us.' Some whom Wesley had ordained began to ordain others, but in 1792 the right to do this was confined to the Conference. The succeeding years gradually approached a solution. One Conference decided by lot to postpone for a year; the next allowed the giving of the Sacrament where desired by trustees and leaders, refused to recognize difference between ordained and unordained, and declared that being received into Full Connexion and appointed by Conference to administer should be the qualification required. In 1795 a Plan of Pacification settled that:

(i.) The Lord's Supper was not to be administered unless the majority of stewards and leaders desired it.

(ii.) The Conference must formally allow each individual case.

(iii.) Where it was already established it might go on.

(iv.) It must be administered only by those appointed by Conference. In a few years the administration was universally accepted. Two years later, in order to meet more drastic criticisms and proposals, further concessions were made by which:

(v.) The leaders were given a veto on the admission and expulsion of members.

(vi.) A circuit might postpone obedience to a resolution of Conference for a year till it could be re-considered.

(vii.) The majority of trustees, stewards, and leaders of any circuit should have a right to demand a meeting of preachers and circuit officers to suspend unfit preachers till Conference.

(viii.) But all nominations were to be made by the Superintendent, and no meeting would be legal without his presence.

These proved insufficient, and the first division took place. The great majority were satisfied; more than 100,000 remained, but about 5,000, with 4 preachers, formed the Methodist New Connexion in 1797. At this stage, when we leave the stream common to all, it is well to consider a few facts and deductions.

Firstly, by the very nature of things, religion is so fundamental that anything connected with it rouses the deepest feelings and the most intense earnestness. Hence most people are intensely conservative as to not only the principles but the methods to which they are accustomed. Secondly, reformers are often most wholesome for the health of any Body as preventing stagnation; but they are inevitably rarely lovable in nature. Their voice is bound to be stormy in men's ears. They are generally a generation or two before their age, and cannot patiently wait for what generally comes about gradually in the days of their grandchildren. Thirdly, the sad thing is that when heat is engendered, wisdom, tact, and even fairness are not always conspicuous on either side, so that the right often puts itself in the wrong. 'See how much wood is kindled by how small a fire.'

In our divisions we have to remember that there are two theories of Church government which have to be reconciled. The Connexional idea involves a central governing body; the Independent and Congregational idea insists on the freedom of each church from external control. It is interesting in our twentieth century to watch the efforts of our Independent friends to secure some of the advantages of connexionalism without sacrificing their main principle. In a connexional system, where an authoritative conference can impose its rules on all its societies, the all-important thing is that the conference shall inspire love and confidence. The 'Old Body' has in the course of years come into possession of an effectively representative Conference where the hundred is brought in simply to be legal registrar for the decisions of the elected three hundred laymen and three hundred ministers. Practically all that Kilham wanted has been given now. But he was eighty years too soon to secure the sympathy of ninety-five per cent. of the Methodists of his day. Wesley made no provision for the rights of the laity because he included his preachers in the laity. The discipline in a society might, under a

wise, personal government like Wesley's, be safely in the hands of the preachers. When the society was obviously growing into a Church, this monopoly could not permanently continue. The English genius is for gradual change by discussion. The sudden crisis seemed to the more eager-minded to demand a large modification over a wide area.

Alexander Kilham, who had evangelized with Squire Brackenbury, became a travelling preacher in 1785, and was ordained in 1792 by Cownley and Atmore. He had been compelled to license himself as a Dissenter, which, as a fact, was in consonance with his real feelings. He was convinced that separation from the Church was necessary, and took an active part in pamphleteering discussion. This continued for some years, during which his residence in Aberdeen familiarized him with Presbyterian Church government. His final proposals insisted on the consent of the members to admission into or exclusion from the society and to the appointment of leaders and stewards; that local and travelling preachers should be appointed by the Leaders' and Quarterly Meeting; and that lay delegates should be elected to the Conference. Printed discussion in that day inevitably involved violence of expression and personalities; finally, Kilham was excluded in 1796. The Leeds Conference of 1797 made some concessions to the request of a convention of reforming delegates, but they were deemed insufficient. The delegates, with Kilham and three preachers, assembled in Ebenezer Chapel, Leeds, under the presidency of William Thom, an orderly-minded Scotsman, forming the Methodist New Connexion. The following year at Sheffield, the new constitution, on the lines already laid down, was established. There were fifteen preachers, with seventeen lay delegates, representing some 5,000 people in ten different circuits. Kilham was a man of considerable gifts and enthusiastic evangelistic zeal. He died the same year, worn out by his labours. In 1814 there were 8,292 members, with 44 ministers. The same

self-denial and poverty which had characterized the earliest days of Methodism characterized the early years of the New Connexion. Perhaps it was the early contact of its first ministerial leaders with Scotland that set the impress of a special respect for the minister in the new community. As a whole its progress has been rather of the consolidating than the ardently aggressive order. In all branches of Methodism the sense of brotherliness is strong. In this particular section, perhaps because of its comparative smallness, the resemblance to a family has been specially marked. A temporary schism among themselves, owing to an uncontrollable brother, was happily past by the time of their jubilee. In 1846 their Deed Poll was formed, in which a permanent element was introduced into the Conference by the election of 12 ministers and 12 laymen as ' Guardian Representatives.' Throughout the century the work of the Daughter was carried on in friendliness and mutual esteem by the side of the Mother, who, during that time, was gradually adapting her constitution to newly-realized needs.

It will not be forgotten that William Booth, born in Wesleyan Methodism, was a New Connexion minister for a while before his desire for freedom led him to the work of the Salvation Army. It may be a lesson worth emphasizing that when the Anglican Church was failing to reach the lowest, Methodism was raised to supply the lack. When Wesleyanism was in danger of growing too respectable, Primitive Methodism stepped into the breach ; when Primitive Methodism was changing, the Salvation Army arose. Happily we have all learnt from the Army's experiences, and well nigh every branch of the Church owns its responsibility, is earnestly trying to discharge it, and has its effective missions to the lost. In 1907, when the United Methodist Church was formed, the New Connexion brought 37,000 members to the common stock.

We must now retrace our steps to the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Wesley's societies were cautiously

and prayerfully feeling their way along the inevitable development which built them into a Church. When we remember the violent repercussions of the French Revolution, we cannot be surprised at the caution, and may well be thankful for general freedom from wasteful misunderstanding and disagreement. At the same time we can recognize some measure of timidity and unwillingness for audacity and adventure.

The agreement to submit to the general rules of the United Societies had worked well while the revered Founder remained. Now that he was gone and the final authority was a number of preachers, growingly there were cases in which individual Churches girded at the Conference requirements. In the North there were Sunday schools where secular instruction was given to poor children. When the Conference decided that the education must be only religious, hard-headed Northerners insisted and went on their way independently.

Sometimes when the circuits were too wide for regular visits of the ministers, the ardent evangelism of earnest men burst out in cottage prayer-meetings, which by and by, as the organization became more closely knit, resented regular control on the circuit plan. At Warrington the hand of order laid on the society was flung off. Phillips, a godly chair-maker, came to the conclusion that the New Testament offered no justification for a separated, salaried ministry. A junction was thus made with local Quakers, who were revolting from their own Quietism, and a separate organization thus grew up, which, after many names, finally settled down to be Independent Methodists, and has continued to this day with its ten thousand or more members.

In this, as in the larger cases of the Primitive Methodists and the Bible Christians, there was no division, no schism. It was simply that enthusiastic evangelists found themselves unable to submit to the trammels of a highly organized system. They went on with their work of calling souls into the light, and, as in Wesley's own

case, their success led to the forming of new societies, linking together into a Body, which finally recognized itself as a Church. Wesley had shown a way which made such a course of action natural. Bourne and Clowes led to Primitive Methodism, Bryan and Thorne to the Bible Christians, independently of Wesleyans, as naturally and inevitably as Wesley led to the Methodist Societies independently of the Anglican Church. They were not divisions, but independent growths from the common tree-stock.

As the Independent Methodists in Warrington started on the claim of resenting control of cottage prayer-meetings, the Primitive Methodists began at Tunstall on the claim to hold camp meetings. But before this, at the beginning of the century, Hugh Bourne's ardent evangelism had led to a revival round Mow Cop, the development of 'conversation preaching,' the forming of classes at Harriseahead, and the building of a chapel. Clowes, a later convert, started a similar movement. All this was without circuit control, though the society thus formed later on was received into Methodism. This simple-hearted, free, uncontrolled action by ardent men and women of little education naturally led to much noise and lack of order. In all ages of the Church such evidences and utterances of emotion have been welcomed by one type and have jarred upon another. It was the old story of Montanism in the second century, and even of Wesley in the eighteenth. Wesley had been sensitive and hesitating about it, but became willing to acknowledge it when he felt it to be of the Spirit. When the artless, but ungoverned, excitement of these Staffordshire preachers roused criticism from their quieter brethren, Bourne 'thought the Methodists a fallen people.' When Lorenzo Dow came from America and told of the camp meetings held in the backwoods, the idea was taken up by these eager enthusiasts as a counter-blast to the excesses of a local fair. We must remember that the Conventicle Acts were not yet repealed, and cannot be altogether surprised

that the Conference in 1807 legislated strongly against camp meetings. Such men as Clowes and Bourne could not be cribbed, cabined, and confined by Methodist rules. Inevitably they went upon their own way, with the result that a new, mighty power was released, especially amidst the working classes. The heroism of the early evangelists was in exact parallelism to that of Wesley's preachers. Men and women full of holy zeal tramped all over the country preaching and winning souls to Christ. The names of Sarah Kirkland and Mary Hawksley will always be of precious memory. Right on for thirty years there was violent persecution, and as late as 1843 two of their ministers were imprisoned for preaching. In 1811 they took the name of Primitive Methodists. It was the age of the Luddites and Levellers. Just as philosophic historians recognize that in the eighteenth century it was Methodism that saved England from the worst extremes characterizing the French Revolution, so we can recognize the part played by Primitive Methodism in spiritualizing the leaders of the great discontent which was taking such ugly forms of violence in the decades before the Reform Act. This characteristic reaction has been continuous. We have only to recall the names of Thomas Cooper, of Chartist fame, Joseph Arch, the leader of the Norfolk agricultural labourers, and the modern leaders of the Labour Movement, who learnt to speak in Methodist chapels.

The first Conference of the Primitive Methodists was held in 1820, and the principle was laid down that there must be in all Church courts two laymen to one minister, a provision tenaciously held till the present day. The numerical growth was phenomenally rapid, as the following table of membership shows.

Year	1819	1824	1843	1860	1875	1907
Members	7,842	33,507	85,565	132,114	165,410	207,300

There were checks owing to this rapidity of growth. In

the earlier years some unfit men had to be purged out; debts were incurred too great for the power of the congregations. Till 1843 there was little centralization. Hugh Bourne during the first years was the General Superintendent. At first the Quarterly Meetings had the main power. The next stage saw the District Meetings, almost like local conferences, keeping their ministers largely within their own borders. Gradually the right of invitations of ministers to circuits grew up, and the District Meetings became more subordinate to the Conference. The Deed Poll, executed in 1829, fixed the constitution by electing members from each District along with a limited permanent element and officials. Fifty years later the Independent idea had gradually given way to the Connexional.

A movement very similar to that which spread from Staffordshire took place almost at the same time in Devonshire and the West of England. The flaming evangelism of William O'Brian (or Bryan) led to revival round Newquay in 1801. As a local preacher he opened preaching-places and formed societies, working within the Methodist system. Like his northern contemporaries, he could not be bound by its rules, and, after several renewed attempts at conformity, was finally excluded from the plan. By the invitation of James Thorne he came in 1815 to Shebbear, in a part of Devonshire untouched by Methodism, and established a large circle of societies round that centre. When the godly curate of that place was removed a chapel was built. The first Quarterly Meeting, marking the foundation of a new denomination, was held in Bryan's house at Holsworthy on January 1, 1816. There were 237 members; in March 1817 they had increased to 1,112.

Bryan had had Quaker associations, and we can trace here, as in Primitive Methodism and later on in the Salvation Army, the influence of Quakerdom. Women played a great part in the early evangelism, heroic in its simplicity, its utter self-denial, its long journeys and

unquestioning faith. The names of Mary Ann Werrey, Mary Thorne, and Catharine Reed are associated with Bryan, the younger Thorne, and others in labours more abundant, spreading the societies to the Isle of Wight, London, Kent, Jersey, and Northumberland. It was early Methodism over again, facing the same persecutions, bearing the same poverty, and rejoicing in the same witness of the Spirit. In 1829 Bryan claimed dictatorship, and on its refusal led a secession. The members returned in a few years, their leader carrying on a long and successful roving evangelism in America. The Bible Christians, as they were finally called, developed along the ordinary Methodist lines. A legal Deed was executed in 1831, giving a constitution almost identical with that of the New Connexion. It is interesting to note that, though among Primitive Methodists and Bible Christians women ministers were appointed to circuits, the order has in both cases died out. The Bible Christians flourished mainly in the West Country, in work and method making the same contribution to religious and social life as the Primitives further north. When, after an abortive attempt at union with these, they finally formed part of the United Methodist Church in 1907, they had in England 220 ministers and 32,000 members.

Having sketched the story of these free, independent shoots from the original stock, we must return to note further definite *divisions*. The main characteristic of the Methodism of the early nineteenth century was simple, practical godliness, with a constant belief in and aim at conversion; but it was the era of consolidation. The position of the preachers was gradually assimilated to that in other Churches. In 1818 the use of the title 'reverend' was authorized; in 1837, to the public Reception into Full Connexion was added the scriptural Laying on of Hands. There was still a thorough evangelical preaching and an orderly building up of the spiritual life in the class meetings. Godliness was profitable in this life, and the leading laity were respected citizens of good position,

while the most influential ministers were decidedly conservative in tendency, fearing excess in politics or in anything else. The great mass of the Church desired peace and the keeping of the rules; perhaps there was more desire for regularity than for strength of pulse-beat. Committees of the laity were formed for the management of the Missionary Society and for other activities of the Church.

There were cases where the decisions of the Conference were disobeyed, and from time to time individual societies separated.

In 1827 there was a serious division in Leeds. There was disagreement as to the introduction of an organ at Brunswick. The authorities in Conference undoubtedly strained the law in giving leave. Yorkshiremen are hard to drive, and there was a considerable secession. These joined with others who had previously separated and formed the Protestant Methodists, to the number of several thousand members.

In 1835 a secession sprang out of the differences about the new colleges for ministerial training, and the Grand Central Association was formed in Manchester. These various fragments merged in the Wesleyan Methodist Association, which by 1839 included 28,000 members.

Looking back, we can see that these warnings should have earlier led to change in the constitution. The magnificent figure of Jabez Bunting—administrator, preacher, and statesman—was too dominant; his personal influence claimed an unjustifiable compliance with his conservative ideas. During the next decade the safety-valve ought to have been eased: instead, the pressure was increased. As usual in such cases, principles and personalities were mixed; a real quarrel sprang up. Many most regrettable things were done, and the fault was not on one side only. There were expulsions, and a furious agitation followed. Concessions were made, but they were insufficient and too late. The membership lessened by more than a hundred thousand in a few years,

and when in 1857 the scattered fragments were joined together as the United Methodist Free Churches, there were only 40,000 members, including 19,000 who came from the previous reformers.

The new organization started naturally with its emphasis on the rights of individual churches, and a watchful eye on ministerial prerogative. Happily the warm evangelism, characteristic of Methodism, was manifest here too. In its half century of separate existence it gave scope for much spiritual and social work, and finally confided great authority to its Annual Assembly.

The Wesleyan Church learnt lessons from its sore tribulation. Districts were formed and organized. Committees of all sorts, composed of ministers and laymen alike, reviewed all the business of the Church as well as of the individual churches. By natural evolution in 1877 the first ' Mixed Conference ' was held, in which the lay and clerical orders sat in equal numbers. All matters of doctrine and ministerial character were reserved for a separate ministerial session, and this session dealt with the stationing of the ministers. After various experiments the present arrangement works admirably, in which a week of the representative session is followed by a week of the ministerial. It is a valued privilege that, though the number in the latter is fixed, any minister can be admitted with voting power.

Time has softened old acerbities. Each side has seen something of the other point of view; each side has leaned towards part of the other's plans. In 1907 the Methodist New Connexion, Bible Christians, and the Free Churches joined under admirably drafted legal enactments into the United Methodist Church. Only a small Methodist Reform Union, side by side with the Independent Methodists, has remained outside. And now, after long and mutual conference, the Daughters and the old Mother have come nearer and nearer to each other, to be, we trust, ere long once more one united family. Each section has brought its own gift to the common treasury—

a gift of sober experience, of practical method, of holy zeal. In all the sections of Methodism we find a general parallelism of growth. Each found the need of educating its ministry, of forming its publishing-house, of opening boarding-schools for its children. Foreign missions are inevitable where the world is looked upon as the parish. Even the smallest chip from the old block has its smaller or larger share in world-wide work. The original Connexion, starting after its Founder's death with the order and organization of his special genius, has developed on lines of greater elasticity, adapting itself to the needs of the day. The younger organizations, starting with his spirit, but with a revulsion from an order which seemed to them in danger of strangling life, have similarly developed into more careful definition and organization.

Finally, when the possibility of Reunion came to be discussed, it was recognized how near together this growth on the two sides had brought all sections, and how happy a balance has been attained between independent action and central guidance, ministerial duty and the priesthood of the individual believer, educational culture and evangelical simplicity. The old misunderstandings have lost their bitterness; each section has consented to further adaptation. He who has dreaded the Pastoral Session as an instrument of priestly dominance is rubbing his eyes to discover that herein has been found a scheme of division of labour by which work can be best done by those who can give sufficient time and specialized knowledge. During the discussions of the last fifteen years the Wesleyan laity have been able to reassure the minds of their other brethren.

In these times of change and of difficulty every Church is feeling the need of economizing all forces that stand for religion. We are legislating in the new scheme for a generation ahead. During the next few decades there will be the gradual adaptation and amalgamation of local machinery; growing intercourse will assure mutual sympathy. The processes of change will not be without

difficulty. Our fathers paid the price for their witness in poverty, contempt, and bodily suffering. The form of their children's sacrifice must be readiness to give up sentiment and association because of their deep faith in the value of the gift that Methodism can offer to the cause of Christ in England. What Wesley preached has become the possession of the great Church Catholic. Yet is it our place to emphasize the permanent need of the old jewels which he rescued from the dust of controversy and oblivion and restored to splendour in the Church's crown. What he preached we lovingly call ' our doctrines.' They are these :

God wills that all men should be saved.

It is through Faith that penitent man attains the salvation God wills.

The Holy Spirit testifies along with man's spirit that he is the loved and loving child of God.

Through the constant presence and work of that Holy Spirit the son's likeness to His Father is to grow more manifest for ever and ever.

It remains for us upon whom this day of opportunity and responsibility has come solemnly to search our hearts to make sure that we still have the inner experience which made our Fathers so mighty for evangelism. We are not without disquieting signs that bid us inquire of ourselves whether the fervour which comes from a personal living experience of forgiveness and power is still our possession. Without it we have no gift for the treasure of the Church Catholic. The dialect of the day may ask for different terms wherein to express the nature of our gift, but all our history claims from us that we shall still assure by our life that the material can never satisfy, that the spiritual is supreme ; that Love is at the heart of the Universe ; that man may know his sins forgiven and his heart at peace ; that the Holy Spirit is ever working in us towards perfect Love ; and that the Kingdom of God

on earth, as in heaven, is not only an aim, but a certain goal. The new Methodism must be faithful to its special experience in the past. It has a great gift in its machinery, but that will never suffice; the driving-force must come through loving contact with God. Not by might, nor by power, but by Thy Spirit, Lord of Hosts.

Part I
THE MESSAGE

II

GOD AND MAN

By Eric S. Waterhouse, M.A., D.D.

We are told that 'of making many books there is no end'; but there might be at least a limitation if every would-be author had to prove the need of writing upon his subject. Having raised that issue, let us face it here. Is there any need, when speaking of the Message of Methodism to the modern world, to discuss a *doctrine* of God and man? May not that be left to the private counsels of the ever-suspect race of theological professors? Is the message of Methodism to the modern world a doctrine, or is it to proclaim the simple evangel 'God so loved the world'?

Question often best answers question. If the messenger is to deliver the message intelligently, must he not know what it means? It means, we say, 'God loved the world.' But that very statement speaks of God, the world, and the relation between them, the very issues that lie at the heart of our deepest thinking. Whoever thinks about God and the world is, on that account, bound to be framing some doctrine. He need not use theological or technical terms. They have their uses, but they do not constitute theology. The scientist who finds it convenient, among the many salts in his laboratory, to talk of sodium chloride, does not ask his wife to pass him the sodium chloride at dinner! Like the average person he asks for salt. The theologians and philosophers discuss God and man in technical terms, but the same issues are discussed in common speech whenever we speak about God and ourselves. We are bound to have a

doctrine about God if we have a belief in Him ; and if we hold that we have a message to give from God to man, we must have a doctrine of God's relation to man. At every turn of the road of life we meet the same relation :

> Flower in the crannied wall,
> I pluck you out of the crannies ;—
> Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
> Little flower—but if I could understand
> What you are, root and all, and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is.

If the flower in the crannied wall raises the problem, can the roots of faith be understood if we ignore it ?

If, then, we are bound to have a doctrine, is there any distinctive Methodist doctrine of God and Man ? May we say that Christ taught the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, and that this is all the doctrine we need ?

In practice—yes. But, in thinking matters out, even such a simple statement raises questions. The term father, even, has not meant the same to all men and in all ages. The times temper the terms. In days when kings were autocrats, the Heavenly King was looked at as an autocrat also, and similarly the severely-minded Puritan Fathers took a much sterner view of what Fatherhood in God implied than we take now. Moreover, in Wesley's day the doctrine of God and man turned upon what was then a live issue of the utmost importance, the Arminian and Calvinist conceptions of their relationship. Into that controversy there is no need to enter here. Some battles end in the dramatic victory of one side and the utter collapse of the other. Others die out gradually, when the ammunition has been used up, or because fresh situations in the campaign force both sides to withdraw to new positions. Such has been the case in the Calvinist controversy. Neither side still lines the old trenches. The issue has ceased to be acute, and, whilst the line of thought which lay behind the Arminian position

has certainly triumphed, we are feeling a need to-day, as the influence of Barth's theology on the Continent at the present indicates—a need of sharp re-emphasis of the moral majesty of God, such as Calvinism, with all its defects, never forgot.

In what follows, however, we are concerned with the doctrine of God and Man generally, as it appears to the educated thought of modern Christianity. It is a doctrine far too broad and great to wear any denominational aspect. After all, the vast majority of Christians are united upon one creed which begins 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.' That single statement will serve as a complete text for this article. It raises the question of the grounds of our belief in God, His attributes of love and power, His creation of the world—in short the doctrine of God and Man. From these three standpoints we will now look at the matter.

'I believe.' Why?

We begin, then, with the statement 'I believe in God'; but, as soon as we say 'I believe in God,' we are challenged by those who say, Why? The dogmatic Atheism of Bradlaugh's day is dead. Unbelief to-day is not prepared to take up the burden of denying that there is a God. It prefers to throw upon belief the task of justifying itself. How can any one know anything certain about God? In other words, is there religious *knowledge*, or is it not merely religious *speculation*? That is the question.

To answer it, we must ask the questioner whether he believes that anything can be known, and we may assume, without much doubt, that he will reply that we have common-sense knowledge. Every one knows that two and two are four. Mathematical knowledge is certain, at any rate. Moreover, every one knows the common facts of sense experience. Fire burns, ice is cold, lead is heavy, grass is green. There is no disputing about such facts.

But when we speak of knowing God, we are using the term knowledge in a wholly different sense, and it is nothing less than confusion to call such doubtful speculation knowledge. Such is likely to be his reply. We believe, he admits, but he will not admit that we know.

In that case, before we discuss what is and is not knowledge, let us try to define knowledge. Knowledge is the familiarity with life that comes from experience. The objector may say that mathematical knowledge, though it may have developed out of our experience, is quite independent of it. We can assert that two and two always and eternally have, do and will make four, and need make no reference to experience to confirm the fact. Yet two drops of water added to two do not make four, visibly, but one; and two drops of water added to two drops of quicklime will certainly not make four of anything in any intelligible sense. If we add two professors to two theories, we get four—what? Certainly not four professors or four theories, or even four ' things,' for a professor and a theory are not alike ' things,' surely. This is not mere ingenious quibbling. It is simply to state that mathematical knowledge is certain only in so far as it is abstract, and that we cannot apply what is abstractly true to concrete experience with the same confidence about the result as we can when we keep our calculations free from concrete application.

For example, we learnt to reason at school that if one man could paper a room in a day, two could paper it in half a day. Those who have had workmen in the house are not quite so sure! It is correct by the same reasoning abstractly, but it is manifestly absurd actually, that a hundred men would do the work in one-hundredth of a day!

It follows that, if we can have knowledge of God, it is futile to ask for certainty of the mathematical kind concerning Him. Such certainty is purely abstract, and shows us that certainty is not the same as reality. When we try to apply our mathematical certainties to the actual

facts of everyday experience, we see at once that their certainty has ceased to apply.

What of the certainty of common experience? The certainty that fire burns? No one doubts it; but can there not be other parts of experience of which we are equally certain, and yet concerning which we cannot convince the objector who denies our certainty. I may be as sure of the beauty of the sunset as of the burning qualities of fire. If any one denies that fire burns, a simple test of putting his hand to the fire would prove convincing! But one cannot thrust one's hand into the sunset to feel its beauty, and if any one says it is a splotch of jumbled colour that has an unpleasant effect upon him, I cannot possibly disprove his assertion. Yet it makes not the slightest difference to my own certainty of its beauty. My certainty is the familiarity gained from my own experience of the sunset, and I *know* it is beautiful.

Similarly with knowledge of God. The experience of life weaves into the very fabric of my mind certain convictions about itself, about life and its characteristics and meaning. Life means love and love as supreme; and love at the heart of things is what God means to me, for God is Love. Others do not share this experience, but have they any right to deny to it the name of knowledge?

Surely not. Even in the common usage of the word knowledge, the claim is justified. I should have no hesitation in saying that Darwin knew nature. But I should have equal confidence is saying that Wordsworth also knew nature. Yet how can the two types of knowledge be compared? Any one can be made to see Darwin's point of view who can understand *The Origin of Species*. But a man may read Wordsworth from end to end and not get a glimpse of his knowledge of nature for himself, and utterly fail to share his standpoint. Yet Wordsworth knew nature, even if his knowledge cannot be passed on to every reader of his poems.

The captain of a liner knows how to make for South Africa from London. So does the swallow. Both know,

but can any one compare the two types of knowledge? The one can be guided, in the main, from books. The other comes out of the experiences of life. Yet we call both knowledge.

Is it not, then, somewhat perverse to try to deny the right of those who claim to know God? Knowledge of God is not rational demonstrable knowledge such as one may gain of physics or chemistry from the text-books of those sciences. It is not knowledge that has logical coercive power. But it still has every right to be called knowledge—knowledge that comes from life.

The grounds of our belief in God, then, are intuitive before they are rational. In other words, the belief in a God of Love at the heart of life and its experiences, whilst it is a rational belief that can be rationally defended, did not spring from any logical argument. It springs from a conviction that grows up out of our own commerce with life. Hence those to whom life has appeared differently may not share our conviction, and, as it cannot be demonstrated as we can demonstrate a proposition in mechanics by reasoning, we leave them unconvinced. But that is no reason for denying that religious experience affords veritable, valid knowledge to those who have it; and, as the overwhelming mass of mankind always has and still does profess some religious belief, we have the right to speak of religious experience as affording a knowledge of the object of that belief to the mind of mankind as a whole.

'The Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,' continues our creed. Let us reverse the order and take the second phrase first, for to see God as the Maker will raise afterwards the question of His relation to His handiwork.

The Problem of Creation

'Maker of heaven and earth.' The notion of the great artificer runs back to the oldest myths of mankind.

But whence came his material? The Babylonian records, which are reflected in Genesis, recognized an eternal deep or chaos which was subdued into order by one of the gods. The writer of the first verses of Genesis had a spiritual insight that put God first, but the words that follow show he had not solved the question whence came the material. The chaos is still there.

Gradually there grew up the orthodox tradition of the Jews that creation was out of nothing, and Christianity took over the notion. In the Middle Ages much ingenuity was mis-spent by both Jews and Christians in trying to reconcile this view with Aristotle, whose counsel, to the Middle Ages, was like that of Ahitophel. Aristotle believed in the eternity of matter, creation being the stamping of form upon its shapeless mass, as the potter moulds the clay. Aristotle therefore provided something as the material with which the Creative Act dealt.

No Christian thinker to-day could be satisfied with this dualism of God and the stuff out of which He creates. Yet how meaningless is the phrase 'creation out of nothing,' except as an assertion of the soleness of God. What analogy can help us? To some extent that of our thought. Thought springs from our mind, not, it is true, out of nothing, but in thought we ourselves can be truly creative. Is, then, this not the best way of thinking of creation? Matter has been evaporated by science itself. Lord Balfour once said we know too much about matter to be materialists. Nowadays we might almost say we know too little. Matter has dissolved into electrons, and electrons are not 'things.' Electricity is a way things behave. Electrons and the mysterious 'Psi' which is said to lie behind them are, for our modern thinkers, mathematical equations rather than things, for only very complicated mathematics can give account of their doings. They possess none of the qualities we attach to material things. Matter is lost—in mathematics!

This brings us nearer to the standpoint of the philosophy

called Idealism, which holds that what we call material is in essence mental. Some Idealists think the material world is the thought of God in an objective—one almost said solidified—form. If any one presses the question whether this implies that God did not think until He made the universe, the answer is that this universe is but one aspect of the eternal thought of God. Creation, therefore, is not something which once was not, and then took place. It is an expression of the eternal activity of the mind of God.

As far as this universe is concerned, there is definite scientific evidence to aid our speculation. The present century has brought to light knowledge that disposes of the notion, as old as the ancient Greeks and older, that atoms are eternal. They are not. They dissolve in radiation, and this enables us to say that the atoms that constitute the universe must have been brought into existence at a point in time. Equally certain is it from the facts of radiation that the universe is machinery that is slowing down, ultimately to stop, for there is no known mechanism that can renew it. Science and Scripture agree in this, that there must have been a beginning and will be an ending of the present universe, but that need imply nothing more regarding creation than that this universe is a phase of an eternal creative activity of God. Creation is not something which God began at a definite point, and from which He will withdraw at a final stage. The universe begins and ends, but creation, like God, has neither beginning nor ending. It is the expression of that self-activity which is the life of God.

The Father Almighty

So much, then, for the story of

> The great morning of the world,
> When first
> God dawned on chaos.

But when we come to the arrival of man on the face of the earth, we are confronted with a very different problem. We are met with the question of God's relationship to man from both a moral and a metaphysical standpoint. Morally the question is whether God's attitude to man is one of concern or unconcern. Metaphysically, the existence of man raises the question of the correctness of the word Almighty. If God is almighty, can man be free? If man is not free, is not God, then, alike the source of good and evil, of man's sin as well as of his goodness? It raises what Professor Pringle-Pattison once said was the almost insuperable difficulty of finding room for God *and* man in the universe. Then both the moral and the metaphysical issues combine in a further question. If God is the Father and almighty, why does He permit the open sore of suffering on this fair world He made?

To take the first question, then—what is God's attitude to man? We have spoken of a Creator, but a creator need not be even a person, much less a father. What, then, is God's relation to man? What can it be? What possibilities exist? We may exclude two of the four that may be conceived. One is that God is capricious, sometimes favourable, sometimes unfriendly, to man. To believe this would be to return to a stage of thought that the educated conscience of mankind has definitely rejected, both on philosophical and on religious grounds—namely the polytheistic idea of partisan gods, taking sides with or against men. The other is that God is hostile to man. If so, man's continued survival on earth seems inexplicable.

There remains, then, this alternative. God is neutral or love towards man. Either He, or in this case one thinks it should be ' It,' is an impersonal force

> That grinds our good and grinds our ill,
> And has no purpose, heart, or will,

or else our Father in heaven. Which is right?

The appeal to 'facts' does not help us much. The world is full of 'facts' to support both arguments. The cold impartiality of natural law that deals out indiscriminately disease and death, health and life, is the real ground for the belief that its author is neutral, that 'the President of the Immortals' is coldly unconcerned with us. On the other hand, surely a man's life has been a very sad and disorganized affair if he has not felt in the presence of beauty, humour, love, truth, that goodness must lie at the heart of things, for nothing but goodness could provide us with so much good. Which alternative is right? There is only one test. It is found in experience. One or other is true. God is either neutral to us or He cares. Put into scientific terms, each of these possibilities represents a hypothesis. Which hypothesis better meets the facts? Do we find we can react better to the experiences of life by believing that all is the work of a power neutral towards us? Mr. Bertrand Russell, who believes this, has had the courage and consistency to work it out, and holds that man's attitude to life must be one of defiance. He must not cringe or cower before the blind, purposeless scheme of things which made him, and presently will scrap him. Let him live and die 'game' at least. That is the logical result of taking the hypothesis God is neutral. It is hardly sufficiently realized that the opposite of religion is not agnosticism, but pessimism. Religion asserts a harmony between the facts of the universe and human ideals. It is pessimism, proclaiming that this aimless universe makes no response to human values, which is the real alternative—pessimism with its neutral God or Principle of all things.

But pessimists have been few. There has never been a race of pessimists. Nor has any single one of them ever been reckoned amongst the world's benefactors. The vast bulk of mankind has chosen the religious hypothesis of a friendly God. Even amongst primitive races, whose deities are often regarded as fierce and bloodthirsty, the worshipper's approach presumes his belief

that at least he can induce his god to show him some favour. Crudely expressed, this is none other than the germ of the notion God is Love, and it may be claimed, therefore, that the testimony of the religions of mankind as a whole is that God, or the power above, however conceived, does enter into friendly relations with man. That religion always has asserted this, and in all its forms does in some way or other continue to assert it, justifies our giving preference to this hypothesis. For if the hypothesis received no verification, it is incredible that it should so persist. If any one says that it is not proved, the reply is that neither is the other. In such cases, decisive proof to convince all cannot be afforded, and that from the very nature of the case.

Yet in life ample proof comes to millions. The fact that belief in the love of God has been the inspiration of what has been highest and best in the lives of the world's saints and heroes, does not prove it true ; but if the other view be true, we may be thankful that they believed the false view ! Not only so, but this belief has helped millions of common folk to shoulder their tasks, and face life's rebuffs undaunted. It has inspired what is loveliest in art and literature. It has robbed death of its sting and the grave of its victory. It has inspired service for others, the love of the brother we see as a sign of love for God, whom we do not see. The hypothesis that God is neutral calls simply for an attitude of cosmic defiance. The contrast between the social implications of the two attitudes is so great that, upon this ground alone, it becomes almost a duty to believe in a God of love. Yet let us simply content ourselves by saying that on every ground the view that God is Love should be accepted for test before trying the other. The verdict of mankind as a whole indicates that those who do so will not need to try the opposing view. They will know that they have found the truth, and will seek no more.

There is one word more that may be said before passing on. Our conclusion so far has been that between the two

possibilities that God cares or does not care, life's experiences must decide for us which is true, but that we should seek first for proof of the former, and not stand, halting and confused, between the two, waiting for a proof to come to us which never will come of itself. But the word 'Father' in our creed, the word that suggests more than any other word—unless that word be mother—the idea of love, was the word invariably used for God by Jesus. Without claiming here all we believe about Him, we may at least claim what every one must admit, that He was the greatest spiritual expert who ever lived. May we not, then, regard the belief that arose out of His experience and the belief that inspired His life as the one we should accept, if only on His authority? May we not be guided in spiritual matters as we are in matters of science, art, economics, and so forth, by the opinion of those who know the subject as we cannot know it? If so, who is there more able than Jesus to guide us? Shall we not, with Him, say, 'God—the Father.'

Almighty

The last word left for us to consider is Almighty. If God be almighty, is man free? If God is almighty, why do sin and pain exist? In the briefest way, let us look just at the central issues only of these problems.

If our concern were simply with the physical universe, and with man as a highly developed animal, it would be at once simpler and better to hold that man was as strictly determined as physical forces seem to be. But moral issues are just as much a part of our experience that needs to be explained as are the laws of the physical universe. The matter has been put neatly by asking if man is a substantive or an adjective. A substantive can stand alone, unqualified. An adjective cannot. It qualifies a substantive. Can man stand independently of God, or is he just a mode, an expression of God's being? From a purely metaphysical point of view it is easier to think of

man as the adjective. But our moral consciousness will never allow us to put down man's evil to God, as this view necessitates our doing. Hence the moral demand for freedom, which comes from the sense we can never shake off—that God cannot alike be the author of good and bad.

The free-will controversy seems endless, but we should do well to recollect that in actual choice there is no problem of freedom. We do choose freely, and that is a simple fact. But when, *after* we have chosen, we look back on the choice, it may be argued that this led to that, and so forth, and hence we are not free. Yet a moment's thought will convince us that the actual living choice and the reflection upon it afterwards are two different things, just as different as electricity is from our ways of conceiving how it works. Some of the most recent developments in physics convince us that we have made some profound blunders in the past by confusing nature's ways with our ways of explaining nature. We have tried to insist that nature's working must conform to the only way in which our minds can conceive it, and we have had some rude shocks from Mother Nature in consequence. For example, the electron jumps from one orbit to another in a way that utterly defies the orthodox scientific ideas of motion. If any one had told one of the scientists of the nineteenth century that this was so he would have brusquely replied that it was ridiculous and impossible. *But it happens.* Our modern scientists admit the incongruity, and are trying to find the solution. The analogy with free will is very close. We act as if we were free ; we judge one another as if we were free. In theory, many turn their backs on practice and argue that we are not free. Is that not to make theory dictate to practice? Is not the more scientific way that of accepting the facts and seeking if possible to reconcile them? A quotation from Professor Eddington is all to the point here :

'The deliberate frustration of our efforts to bring knowledge of the microscopic world into an ordered plan, is a strong hint to alter the plan. It means that we have

been aiming at a false ideal of a complete description of the world. . . . It has become doubtful whether it will ever be possible to construct a physical world solely out of the knowable. . . . It seems more likely that we must be content to admit a mixture of the knowable and unknowable. This means a denial of determinism, because the data required for the prediction of the future will include the unknowable elements of the past.'[1]

We are just as much in a transition period in science as we are in theology. The old conception of a universe bound by rigid and unalterable laws of nature is finding itself challenged, at the very moment when it seemed to have triumphed. It may even be in future that, instead of interpreting the action of man's mind after the analogy of the material world, we shall have to reverse the process, and look upon the laws of nature as we look upon human habits—namely as the normal, regular activity of a free agent, and not as the process of a rigid mechanism.

It is all to the good that science has lost the dogmatic temper of the nineteenth century, and at the same time, that theology has been shaken out of its dogmatism. Fifty years ago science and theology fulminated against each other, both dogmatically certain. Now the two look each other in the face and both say, ' I am not as certain as I was. What do you think ? ' Ignorance is learning its knowledge, and knowledge its ignorance.

To argue in this way is not to make positive arguments out of the negative grounds of ignorance. But it is to protest against the assumption that, if the facts cannot be brought within the compass of our accepted theories, they are to be suspect as facts. If any fact were ever plainly testified to by experience, it is our inner sense of freedom. As such we must accept it. We have the sense of compulsion not infrequently, of something impelling us to act in a way in which we do not wish to act. Freedom we know and compulsion we know. To tell us we are compelled when we know we are free, and that because of

[1] *The Nature of the Physical World*, p. 228.

a scientific theory, itself none too certain, is, in the literal sense, an impertinence.

From a wholly different point of view it has been argued that man cannot be free, for in that case God would not be almighty. He would be limited by free agents other than Himself in the universe. Once again our reply must be that, if freedom is a fact of experience, we cannot deny it on the ground of a theological dogma any more than on the ground of a scientific dogma. If it be said that human freedom limits divine omniscience, the reply is that freedom is a fact of experience, and omniscience is not, and we must prefer what is warm from contact with experience to that which is speculative. Yet, after all, to use James's celebrated illustration of the chess-players, the master player knows every move on the board and can bring the game to the desired end. He does not know which of the possible number of moves the other player will actually choose, but he knows that, whatever he choose, no move can be unknown to him, nor the reply to it. Similarly, God may know all the possibilities, and yet not know which of them we choose.

Then, again, such a limitation of God's power, as free will is said to imply, is appointed by God. It is a self-limitation. Omnipotence does not and cannot mean the power to do anything, even the self-contradictory thing. It means the power to choose one's own conditions. That alone belongs to God, and, if He choose to create men free, surely what He chooses cannot limit, in any but a technical sense, the One who chooses.

Pain and Sin

The last, greatest, and least soluble of the problems of God and man is that of evil, physical and moral—in other words, pain and sin. In the Middle Ages there was more sensitiveness about sin than about pain. To-day, when medical and surgical skill, and the use of anaesthetics, have considerably lessened the heritage of pain, there is

much more concern over it than over sin. To say, as many do, that God does not will pain is a statement that is sentimental rather than rational. Does it mean that if I put my hand into the fire I am not to feel the burn? It would soon end my earthly existence if I did not! Does it mean that the consequences of deliberate sin should not entail suffering? It may be that God does not will disease, for disease is abnormal, but some pain certainly has uses in the scheme of things.

Nor must we assume that pain is always necessarily an evil. If we trouble to ask why we assume this, the only answer is that we do not like pain. But can we make our physical preferences the basis of what is ultimately good or bad for us? Surely one of the first lessons of childhood showed us otherwise! That we do not always see the good of pain, is true, but it does not follow that it must be in a final sense evil.

Of the problem of pain it must suffice to say three other things briefly. The first is that it exists much more amongst those who are fit and strong than amongst actual sufferers. These seem to find a practical solution, when we can see no intellectual solution, and the bravery and patience of uncomplaining suffering testify again and again to the fact that the sufferers do not find pain drives them farther from God. He would be a bold man who, when asked whether prosperity or pain is the more fatal to religious faith, says pain.

The second is that those who tell us that the problem of pain must be solved before we can believe in a God of love are quite wrong. Actually the belief in a God of love grew up in face of the known facts of pain. If it had been that first came the belief in a God of love, and then pain arose, the latter might be said to contradict the former. But it was otherwise. Those, therefore, who were led to believe in a God of love, did so knowing these facts that are said to be contradictory to that belief. Again, if the belief in a God of love is abandoned, the fact of pain remains, but the problem vanishes. If there is no God

of love, the existence of pain is no more a problem than the existence of anything else. Everything is just what it happens to be, and that is all. It is the belief in a love of God that creates the problem, but that belief cannot create anything that is destructive of itself. Pain may be difficult to reconcile with that belief, but it is a patent contradiction to argue that belief in the love of God creates a problem that destroys the belief which gave rise to it. If any one replies that it should do, even so the answer is that in actual fact it does not, and our concern is with actual belief in God as existing fact, not with a theoretic reason for showing that such belief should recognize itself as unfounded.

The third point is that our very power to criticize our Maker is of His making. Either, then, He ' builded better than He knew,' or He deliberately allowed us the power to judge His handiwork. The fact that we are allowed to seek a solution is the clearest indication that there is one. For a God who would allow us to suffer, and inquire why we suffer, when our suffering is purposeless, would be the most complete fiend that imagination could conceive. Either, then, there is a solution, or there is not even a neutral God. We must believe in a malevolent Power. Yet, if so, how does such a power create moral goodness in us? We are led to an impasse from which we turn in relief to cling, despite the problem of pain, to the thought of a God of love.

Sin presents a final and insoluble enigma. Pain may be somehow good. Sin cannot be. Yet sin cannot contradict the belief in a God of love, for if we hold, as all do, that sin should not be, we thereby also assume that good should be. Of course it should. We never hear of the problem of good. If any one says that the fact of sin shows that moral goodness does not belong to God, to whom does it belong, for certainly it exists? Presumably to us. Then once again we are better creators than the Creator. We have produced a good that He cannot produce. Does any man really believe that we can

create goodness out of nothing? The only alternative is to regard goodness as grounded in God, and given to us. The question why and how sin comes, is one for theologians and philosophers to debate. But it does not debar our belief in the Father.

We come back, then, to the single sentence from which we started—'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.' Many questions have arisen out of those few words. But not one of them has the power to cancel a single letter in this sentence of an historic creed to which the Methodist Church subscribes with the great fellowship of Catholic Christianity. Yet perhaps the confidence we have of the relations between God and man lies in that of which the next essay speaks, the fact of Christ, of God in man.

III

THE PERSON OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

By J. Scott Lidgett, M.A., D.D.

The outstanding mark of the Christian religion is the worship of Jesus. From the beginning He has been the object of faith, the ground of hope, the Personality who has drawn to Himself a love which would be essentially irreligious were it given to any other than God. Christians were at the outset baptized 'into the name of the Lord Jesus' (Acts viii. 16; Rom. vi. 3), and their confession of faith was the affirmation 'Jesus is Lord,' a declaration so profoundly significant that St. Paul affirmed that no man could make it 'but in the Holy Spirit' (1 Cor. xii. 3). Jesus the Lord was acknowledged to be the Christ, and this meant such a transformation of Christhood as involved the restatement of the entire content of religious truth in terms of His relationship to it. The ordinary salutation of the Pauline Epistles associates 'God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.' Every one of these, the association with God, the attribution of Lordship, the recognition of Christhood, is amazing as coming from an ex-Pharisee, and yet is treated as the very bond of agreement and fellowship between St. Paul and his readers. Even St. James, in many respects the least distinctively Christian of the New Testament writers, speaks of Jesus Christ as 'the Lord of glory' (James ii. 1).

This concentration of faith upon the Person, and not merely upon the teaching and precepts, of our Lord was the result of three inseparable factors: His Personality as the expression of His unique self-consciousness, His resurrection to heavenly glory, and the Holy Spirit

as creative of the whole of that experience, which caused believers to receive and 'walk in newness of life' (Rom. vi. 4, vii. 6). The Church enjoyed through our Lord Jesus Christ a new idea of God, realized a new relationship to Him, and entered into a new fellowship with Him. This experience was realized as being the effect of redemption, reconciliation, regeneration, brought about by His death, His Cross becoming the subject of glorying (Gal. vi. 14), wrought into the very texture of His own life and of the life imparted by Him to His people. And of all this our Lord was not only the means and mediator, but the sphere. Believers were 'in Christ,' and the more fully they realized 'access through Him by one Spirit unto the Father' (Eph. ii. 18) the more perfectly they became conscious that 'Christ is All and in all' (Col. iii. 11).

In setting forth our Lord as the object of faith, the apostolic and subsequent writers treated Him as human. His personality and His work were historic, belonged altogether to the sphere of actuality, and not either of myth-making imagination or of philosophic abstraction and construction. And His humanity was, at once, natural, completely normal, and permanently abiding. Transcendent and sinless as was 'the man Christ Jesus,' yet His human nature and character were so typical that His perfection expressed the ideal of all that men, through Him, were destined to become. He was 'the first-born among many brethren' (Rom. viii. 29).

Yet if our Lord was man, perfect in the integrity of human nature, He was more than man. He was God 'manifest in the flesh'—God in complete revelation and self-communicating grace. The earliest and characteristic benediction is triune; 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit'—the three being not merely co-existent, but inseparable and co-inherent. Christ did for man what only God can do; was to man what only God can be. The Church came to recognize Him as the God-man

(Θεάνθρωπος). He was God incarnate, not man deified, for the Ebionites and Adoptionists were an insignificant minority, and represented, not the primal form and spring of the Christian faith, but a transitory throw-back or by-product of it. So true is this, not only of the apostolic faith, in its first fervour of devotion, and of post-Nicene faith in its articulated expression, but the independent witness, Pliny, writing in the beginning of the second century a report to the Emperor Trajan about the Christians in Bithynia, describes the outstanding feature of their worship as being the singing of a hymn 'to Christ as God' (*Carmenque Christo quasi Deo dicere secum invicem*).

In all this, there is to be found the intimate and inseparable union of a judgement of fact, or reality, with a judgement of value, or of religious experience and estimation. Yet, however vital this confession may be to faith, and however it may be vitalized by faith, it cannot in the nature of the case be treated either as self-enclosed or as complete in itself. On the contrary, it raises grave problems of thought, which must needs be solved, or at least be recognized as presented for solution, if faith is to find either reasoned and reasonable expression and confirmation, or, within narrower limits, is to attain the strength and confidence of assured and profound spiritual insight. The religious valuation of the human Jesus as Divine Lord carries with it the necessity of investigating His relationship to God, to man, and to the universe, in such wise that, as the object of faith, He may be found to be central to, and not eccentric from, reality treated, as it must needs be treated, as a consistent whole. The fundamental problems so raised include, at least, (1) the nature of the Godhead, (2) the general relations of God to man and the universe, which make the fact of Christ as God-man both possible in itself and, although transcending all other facts, congruous with the universal meaning and way of God, (3) the capacity of human nature to receive, become united with and manifest God, and (4) the effect upon the

two natures, divine and human, by their union, through the Incarnation, in the Person of Christ, including the way in which His Personality, thus divine-human, is to be conceived.

It was upon these problems that the early Christian thinkers concentrated their thought, and in regard to them that the great Christological controversies arose. The material for their solution was supplied by the statements of our Lord about Himself as reported in the Gospels, the Pauline and the Johannine writings; especially by such statements as the prologue to the Fourth Gospel (John i. 1–18), Col. i. 15–20, together with Phil. ii. 5–11, and Heb. i, ii. In dealing with this material they used the most congenial of the thought forms that were available to them, those of the Platonic philosophy, tinctured here and there by Stoic ideas. In the earlier centuries—particularly the third and fourth, every part of the subject was explored, and every alternative put forward. The most eminent thinkers of the third century, most notably Tertullian, Origen, Paul of Samosata, Sabellius, made suggestions which were afterwards to be adopted, modified, or dismissed by the common judgement of the Church. In the fourth century the Arian controversy raised the whole question of the Deity of Christ, the Apollinarian the completeness of His human nature, the Nestorian the union of the two natures in His Person, and the Eutychian the abiding distinction of these in the Incarnation. Eventually, the creed that resulted from the Councils of Nicaea (A.D. 325) and Constantinople (A.D. 382) declared the faith of the Catholic Church 'in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, Begotten not made, Being of one substance with the Father, By whom all things were made; Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven. And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, And was made man'—a statement in which practically every clause and every

term ends a discussion and closes a controversy. After the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431) had dismissed the Apollinarian and Nestorian heresies, the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) gave additional and final formulation to the Christological creed of the Church, declaring our Lord to be 'truly' (ἀληθως) God, 'perfectly' (τελειως) man, and to unite in His one Person the two natures of God and man, 'without confusion' (ἀσυγχύτως), 'without conversion' (ἀτρέπτως) into one another, 'indivisibly' (ἀδιαιρέτως) and 'inseparably' (ἀχωρίστως). This creed has remained, not only unquestioned, but as basal, ever since, alike in East and West; with Roman, Lutheran, and Reformed; with Anglican and Presbyterian; as well as, for practical purposes, though they repudiate what is called a 'credal basis,' with the Independent Churches of the English-speaking world. One word of criticism may be added. In all the individual contributions, and in some of the collective decisions, the modern mind may well detect the tendency to treat merely fruitful suggestions as precise definitions of the indefinable and ineffable, complementary descriptions as though they were mutually exclusive, and to use, particularly in the Chalcedonian formula, abstract terms, which lent themselves too easily to quasi-physical suggestions.

In view of the Methodist object of this book, it will be well to say something as to the attitude of John Wesley to the creeds of the Church, and, particularly, to the doctrine of the Person of Christ that is formulated in them. He accepted them as a loyal and convinced clergyman of the Church of England, and assumed them to be a faithful representation of the teaching of Holy Scripture. His exposition of the great Christological texts in his Commentary on the New Testament conforms to them. At the same time, keen logician though he was, Wesley was by no means a philosopher, or even in the technical sense a theologian. His temper and outlook were rigorously practical. Hence none of his published sermons is devoted expressly either to the divinity, the

humanity, the incarnation, or the Person of Christ. He preached, however, a sermon on the Trinity at Cork in 1775, and subsequently published it. In the course of it he remarks: 'I dare not insist upon any one's using the word Trinity or Person,' and proceeds to say that men are not called upon to believe mysteries. 'Now the mystery,' he adds, 'does not lie in the fact, but altogether in the *manner* of it.' Applying this principle to the Incarnation, he declares, 'Again! "The Word was made flesh!" I believe this fact also. There is no mystery in it, but as to the *manner how* He was made flesh, wherein the mystery lies, I know nothing about it; I believe nothing about it; it is no more the object of my faith than it is of my understanding.'

This statement is characteristic, not only of Wesley, but of his age. It was intolerant of mystery, and its interest lay, not in Christology for its own sake, but in the controversy with Deism. For Wesley, the main concern was with the work of Christ, its atoning and redemptive efficacy, its universal purpose, its way of salvation. Above all, he dwelt upon its benefits, as experienced in the life of the Spirit and of Sonship, of faith and, still more, of love. The true Divinity of our Lord was essential to all this, and was accepted as fact, on the authority of the New Testament, and for its all-sufficient soteriological value.

In this soteriological emphasis, Wesley was in accord with Christological teachers of the past. Even Athanasius found his most vital arguments for the Deity of the incarnate Son in the consideration that only God can reveal God, and that only God can impart eternal life to men, as their Redeemer from sin and death. His formula was that the divine Son of God 'became man that we might become God.' Later on, the same interest dominates the thought of Anselm in his *Cur Deus homo*. The true Divinity of Christ is essential if His death is to have sufficient value to make it an adequate satisfaction to the majesty of God for the enormous offence of sin. So, again, as will be seen later on, his interpretation of the

Incarnation was for Luther vital to his doctrine of justification by faith.

In this respect there is an important difference between Athanasius and Augustine, and, at the Reformation, between Luther and Calvin. Augustine, after his long struggle, became thoroughly Athanasian and Catholic in his doctrine of the Person of Christ. In his great treatise *De Trinitate* he gave precision to the doctrine of the Trinity and illustrated it by a wealth of analogies drawn from physical, social, and, above all, psychological sources. In particular, he effectively established the place of the Holy Spirit in the Being of God, as the hypostasized relation between the Father and the Son that is essential to the perfection of the triune Personality of God, which is reflected in the threefold unity of personality in men. For this achievement he made full use of the doctrine of the mutual interpenetration (περιχωρήσις, *circumincessio*) of the three Persons in the Godhead, which is the eternal condition of the unity of God in Being, self-manifestation, and activity. Love is the key to this mystery of complete unity in personal triplicity. In all this, Augustine displays the value of his Christian, and also Platonic, reaction from his previous Manichaeism.

Yet, to some extent, the form and the very completeness of this reaction reduces, in Augustine, the *Christly* emphasis of the New Testament and of Christian experience. He acknowledges Christ as 'true Mediator' by becoming 'mortal with men' (*Conf.* x. 43). Yet his concern to find *God*—above all, the truth about Him as the all-perfect Creator, Universal Sovereign, Source and End of His whole creation, and the effective power of His grace—and to enter into saving and satisfying communion with God, led him to throw the emphasis upon Christ rather as the Mediator, than as the spiritual and human sphere, of this truth and grace. Christ is addressed only once in the *Confessions*: 'Christe Jesu, adjutor meus et redemptor meus' (x. 1). He dwells upon the activity of the Logos in creation, and upon the

sovereign will of grace. Yet this very insistence throws Fatherhood and Sonship—vital to a satisfactory interpretation of Christ—into the background, and makes Augustine a great expositor of Theism and Trinitarianism, but not of Christology, or even of soteriology in the full evangelical sense of the New Testament. The same criticism applies to Calvin, and for similar reasons. When the sovereign will of God is treated as the key-stone of theology, the means adopted by that will, while becoming to God and of satisfying comfort to His elect, must needs lose much of their intrinsic importance.

These historical references show clearly that the doctrine of the Person of Christ has both theological and soteriological importance, each of them acting and re-acting upon the other. Yet the very fact that the Church confessed the Deity of Christ largely by reason of His Saviourship forced Christian thinkers to face a strictly theological problem. How was the unity of God, the consistent maintenance of which was essential, to be combined with the ascription of true Divinity to Jesus Christ as His Son? The way was perilous, for it lay between a subordinationism, that reduced the Godhead of the Son even to its eventual destruction, or to a Sabellianism, which reduced the duality or trinity of Persons in the Godhead to mere phases, successive or simultaneous, of the self-manifestation of God. Eventually the result was reached that was expressed, as has been seen, with unequalled precision and wealth of illustration, by Augustine. The process took its starting-point from the affirmation of the faith that if the universe be divided between the Creator and the creatures, our Lord had His rightful place with the former over against the latter. Hence the construction of the doctrine of His Person began with the interpretation of the term applied to Him in the prologue to the Fourth Gospel, 'the Logos,' understood as the Reason and Word, the immanent Meaning and the transcendent Utterance, of God in eternal and indissoluble Oneness. Later on, the thought of Tertullian, and through him of

Church teachers, swung over from the concept of the Logos to that of the Son, but in such wise that the suggestions of the former were carried over into the latter. As the result of this fusion, Origen adopted and established the doctrine of the eternal Sonship, as setting forth the essential and supra-temporal begetting of the Divine Son, whose Sonship is the condition and not the consequence of His incarnation. From that time onwards this concept became the common doctrine of the Church, and was embodied in the Nicene and subsequent creeds. As the result, the point of departure for the doctrine of the Person of Christ became the eternal and Divine Personality of the Son of God, in such wise that His human nature, while confessed, fell into the background for thought, and that, in order to preserve the unity and Divinity of His Personality, the human nature of the incarnate Son, though theoretically complete, was held to be impersonal.

Until recent times this point of view and construction has prevailed within the Church, the Socinian and later Unitarian doctrines falling, of course, outside it. One memorable exception must, however, be made. Luther, seeking God, as he declared, not in majesty, but in love, roundly said, 'I have no God, whether in heaven or in earth, and I know of none, outside the flesh that lies in the bosom of the Virgin Mary. For elsewhere God is utterly incomprehensible, but comprehensible in the flesh of Christ alone.' The doctrinal reason for this outburst will shortly appear. Luther was not consistent in this, as in many other respects, for he constantly treated the majesty of God as real and as terrible, in as complete a contrast to the graciousness and condescension of the Manger as to the Divine sympathy and self-giving of the Cross. Yet, inconsistency notwithstanding, this declaration may well be treated as introductory to the doctrine of the Person of Christ in modern Christian thought.

If the doctrine of the Person of Christ had profound

theological, as well as spiritual, importance for the first ages of Christian thought, this is no less the case at the present time, for His relationship to religion is shaken at the very root if His relationship to reality be unsolved. And the problems raised are far more complex and far-reaching for the twentieth century than they were for the third and fourth. The question of the Person of Christ is involved in the larger question of Personality, both as ascribable to God and as distinctive of man. Hence great issues, both philosophical and psychological, must be decided in connexion with the Person of our Lord. Again, great critical questions must be determined, involving, not only the accuracy of the records in detail and the credibility of their portraiture as a whole, but the interpretation of a Personality, who is historical, on the one hand, and yet so ideal, on the other, that all the creative imagination of spiritual aspiration finds complete expression and satisfaction in Him. Since Christ is the embodiment and generative spring of supreme spiritual values, the place of these values in the nature and constitution of the universe must be ascertained. Are they merely subjectively human, or are they the supreme ends in and for which the universe exists? If the doctrine of the Incarnation be accepted, can this truth be regarded as attributable to Christ alone, or, if it be true of Him, is this not because it is universally true, or at all events possible, of mankind? In either case, thought is carried back to the relationship of Christ, not only to man, but to the cosmos. What is involved, not merely in His self-communicating Saviourship, but in the Creatorship, which is the basal origin from which all else proceeds? All these questions are raised by, and are vitally implicit in, the doctrine of the Person of Christ. It is clear that their adequate investigation demands a comprehensive treatise, and is beyond the range of a brief study like this. All that can be done is to present a statement on the subject that will show that all these issues have been kept well in mind.

Our task is to set forth, and so far as possible to construe, Christ as the supreme Personality of human history, incomparably unique, as the creative Author, Object, and all-embracing Content of the faith of the Church, to show what is involved in all this, and thereby to establish, not only that all this is consonant with truth and reason, but that it embodies and reveals the only satisfying reason by which the whole of reality can be explained. Christology must, above all, be descriptive. It must ascertain, appreciate, and present the fact of Christ, the sum total of facts that are based upon and held together by the supreme, all-embracing, and organizing fact of His Personality. It must unfold the immanent meaning of this fact of facts, importing nothing into it from outside and exercising peculiar care in the use of metaphysical concepts, especially such as lend themselves to merely physical, that is, infra-personal, suggestions. By this method it may be confidently hoped that the truth, 'as truth is in Jesus,' will so shine in its own light as to satisfy all the aspects and interests concerned, provided that it be borne in mind that all human thought must needs be inadequate, but that its inadequacy to this subject is precisely the same in kind as its inadequacy, for the present, to render in complete and final form the meaning of reality as a whole. The content of the doctrine thus evolved must needs remain a matter of faith. Yet the old contrast between faith and knowledge has by this time been superseded. All knowledge, in every sphere, has its originating spring in faith and consequently brings confirmation to faith. At every stage of the process, knowledge without faith is dead, even as knowledge. And this is above all true where any knowledge of Personalities is concerned.

In endeavouring to describe the fact of Christ, either of two alternatives is open to us. We may start from the final results reached by the apostolic writers and by the creeds of the Church, and go back to the beginning, using these as the means of interpretation. Or we may

endeavour to start where the first disciples started in the presence of Jesus, and to reproduce, with reasonable criticism, the unfolding of the truth as it became gradually known to them. This latter course is to be preferred, as more scientific in itself, and as giving a better chance for the facts to speak for themselves in all their wealth and vitality, without being stereotyped by a foregone conclusion that has the additional limitation of being expressed in formal terms that, may be, are too restrictive or antiquated completely to reflect the reality. This, at all events, is the way of the modern world.

Christ, then, is the supreme historic Personality, whose supremacy is shown at least in this, that His unique influence has been due to His being the personal bearer and embodiment of a new and transforming idea of God, which has become, in inseparable union with His Personality, the highest, the final, the comprehensive meaning of belief in God. With this idea of God, the character and life of Christ were in such complete and unbroken harmony that faith in this revelation established itself, not by argument, but by faith in and fellowship with Himself. The final event of His life confirmed the belief of His followers in the supreme value of His Person, in the values it realized, and, in both united, as the true and complete manifestation of God. 'God raised Him from the dead.' Thereby His death became, not a mere tragedy, awful as it had been, but an integral part of His revelation of God through His own self-fulfilment. As the result, His followers received His Spirit, and were brought, by an emancipating, regenerating, and uplifting experience, to enjoy, in Christ, the same relationship to God as had been the ground and animating principle of the life of their Master and Lord. Nothing lower and less than this is the fact of Christ.

What, then, was the account that Jesus gave of Himself?

1. First of all, He called Himself 'the Son of man.' The term was undoubtedly taken from Daniel. Its significance was apocalyptic: He was the heavenly

man. Yet even Daniel had intended to emphasize the typical humanity of him, who was to terminate for ever the sway of the wild beasts, whose empire had degraded and contradicted the essential and entire meaning of humanity. This emphasis was deepened and its meaning enlarged by many sayings in which Jesus used the term to connote His complete and unprivileged human nature, its subjection to all the conditions that control and educate human nature throughout earthly life, and, not least of all, His entire solidarity and sympathy with all men as the very ground of His apocalyptic Lordship over them.

2. Yet our Lord also called Himself 'the Son,' and His life unfolded itself from beginning to end in direct and unbroken apprehension of and response to God, as in a unique sense His Father. This consciousness informed His faith, explained His fearlessness, created His ideal of religion and life, supplied Him with boundless resources of spiritual, and even physical, power, and fashioned His entire experience of life and death into a transcendent yet natural and consistent whole. 'I and My Father are one' may or may not convey an ontological truth; but, at the least, it sums up the unique spiritual consciousness of Christ.

3. Christ treats His Sonship, however, as in such conformity with manhood that it is normative and should become normal for all men. The Sermon on the Mount, for example, as the proclamation of the absolute religion finds its explanation in the Lord's Prayer, as governed by the opening, 'Our Father, which art in heaven,' and its end, 'That ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven' (Matt. v. 45).

4. This Sonship, however, while ideally normal for men is based upon and derived from the unique relationship of Christ to God. 'No one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him' (Matt. xi. 27).

5. Furthermore, this communication to men is treated by our Lord as dependent upon His death ' as a ransom for many,' and as realized through the baptism of His Spirit, which He teaches His disciples to expect. The Christianity of the New Testament is explicable only as the experience of men, who conformed to, reflected, and, thereby, corroborated in every particular, the whole of this living truth. The Gospels and the Epistles are simply a description and exposition of it.

I. God was, in a unique way, completely united with, and manifested in, the Personality of ' the man Christ Jesus.' God manifest is Christ.

This perfect unity of God and man, the Divine and the human, unfolded itself in the consciousness of Jesus in and through the relationship of Sonship. This Sonship meant the most intimate fellowship and indissoluble unity with the Father. It meant also that He was ' filled with the Spirit.' The life history of Jesus is explicable only as the realization and enjoyment, the maintenance and pursuit, of all that was involved in this unique consciousness. His Personality was one ; His self-consciousness was ' perfectly ' human, yet ' truly ' divine. His humanity was not merely the mirror or the vehicle of the Divine, still less was it a shadow cast upon it or even a veil thrown over it. God was ' *manifest* in the flesh.' The life of Jesus was that of the Divine-human Son; it revealed the Father, and manifested the activity of the indwelling Spirit through a transcendent unity in triplicity, which was yet the fulfilment of manhood.

The fact of Christ shifts the centre of theistic thought from the universe to man. In this respect it reverses the process of the Old Testament. In ancient times, Jehovah had been apprehended as ' the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of the fathers,' ' the Lord God of Israel.' The task of the prophets and wise men had been to uplift, enlarge, and ground this limited conception of God till He became fully recognized as

' the Creator of the ends of the earth,' so that the heavens declare His glory, and that, because ' He is strong in power, not one ' of the heavenly bodies ' faileth ' (Is. xl. 26). While His spiritual and moral perfection was adorable, and was set forth as the inmost secret of His Godhead and the key to His purpose for mankind, yet the very grandeur of the cosmic ground and setting of this truth, when seen in conjunction with the insignificance and sinfulness of men, tended to throw the emphasis on the ' otherness ' of His majesty till He appeared to be over against and apart from mankind. The result was seen in the hardened legalism which the ministry of Jesus was directed to destroy or, rather, to transform. In Christ, therefore, the anthropocentricity of revelation was restored. Its cosmic significance was preserved in a more spiritual way, not so much as the explication of the idea of God, as the interpretation of God in Christ Jesus, and what is implied in it as to the relation of Christ, the Son of God, and the supreme values manifest in Him, to the origin, constitution, and end of the universe itself. Of this process and culmination the prologue to the Fourth Gospel, the Epistle to the Colossians, and Hebrews i. and ii. are the outstanding monuments. Henceforth the sovereign Creatorship of God is seen to consist in the Fatherhood made manifest in the Personality of the divine-human Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. The mystery as well as the truth of this is set forth in the climax of St. John's prologue. ' No man hath seen God at any time ; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared '—i.e. interpreted—' Him ' (John i. 18).

The eternal, the completely realized, all-holy and blessed perfection of God is, in itself, ineffable, and, for mortals coming into their spiritual life under the conditions of time and sense, strictly inconceivable. Christ is, therefore, the manifestation of God in terms of humanity, as conditioned by the terrestrial time-process in which, not only men, but Christ has appeared.

Yet the mystery of the Incarnation is in line with the mystery of creation and of the relationship, immanent, as well as transcendent, in which the Creator stands to His created universe. In principle they are the same, and in some respects the Incarnation is the lesser mystery of the two, for it is easier to conceive of the spiritually perfect God becoming united with and manifest in perfect man, than as present, not only above, but within a universe the limitations of which make it an altogether inadequate dwelling-place and vehicle of spiritual perfection. Yet, notwithstanding this, true theism is as insistent upon the immanence of God in His world as upon His transcendence, and must needs treat Him, not as wholly concealed, but as partially manifest in it. In both spheres the speech, in which God reveals Himself, must needs determine and thereby limit His self-expression. Yet this self-limitation, if this be the correct term, is essentially less in the manhood of Christ than in the universe apart from Christ. Hence the Person of Christ must be treated, and is rightly treated, as the manifestation of God in perfect manhood, and in manhood which attains its ideal fulfilment in the perfected form and the complete enjoyment of the spiritual relationship of God to man—that of Fatherhood and Sonship—a relationship that is shadowed forth by creation, aspired after by men, but attained and made manifest only in the 'only-begotten Son' of the Father, made man.

II. The Incarnation, treated as the meaning of the Person of Christ, declares and is indeed dependent upon, the affinity of God and man of the Divine and human natures that have been united in our Lord.

The phrase of Charles Wesley's hymn, that our Lord became man 'widest extremes to join,' while it has, no doubt, a certain religious justification, cannot be treated as theoretically correct. It is irrational to imagine that the Son of God *manifested* Himself and *declared* the Father by passing into a manhood whose 'otherness' must needs conceal, or even hamper, Him. The danger of any such

conception of contrast is shown by the extreme statement of it by Spinoza. 'That God took upon Himself the nature of man,' is, he says, no less absurd 'than if one were to say that a circle had taken upon itself the nature of a square' (*Ep.* 73). Passing by the irrelevance of the geometric illustration, this statement rests upon the Cartesian dualism, which treated matter and thought as parallel and independent manifestations of God, instead of seeing, by means of the doctrine of evolution, that matter culminates in thought, is interpretable only in terms of thought, and that, therefore, thought, taken in the largest sense and as revealed in man, is the highest and most adequate expression of God. This culmination in thought, or spirit, is so organically related to the universe and its evolution that it must be taken, above all in its highest spiritual form, as the congenial sphere and instrument of the manifestation of God. The 'otherness' of God must not be pressed to involve either His separation from or His contrariety to the created world, rising to man and culminating in Christ, which, just because it 'lives and moves and has its being' in and for Him, must, in varying degrees, have affinity with Him.

Christian thought has in the past oscillated between the full recognition of this affinity and a hard-and-fast insistence upon the apartness of God and human nature, and upon their completeness apart from, and in contrast with, one another. The suggestion of such apartness is indeed the weakness of the Chalcedonian watchwords, and of much Christological doctrine that has founded itself upon them. On this side, Aquinas and Calvin must be placed. The trouble has been with the predominant use of such abstract terms as 'nature,' 'substance,' 'essence,' and 'attributes,' and their importation into the doctrine of the Person of Christ to the obscuring of the fundamental facts of His own self-consciousness and of His influence. Yet the affinity between God and Man—the capacity of the finite to receive the Infinite,

and, above all, the capacity of man to receive the fullness of God—has been the teaching of many of the profoundest Christian thinkers, e.g. Athanasius and the more evangelical mystics. Notably was this the case with Luther. His doctrine of justification demanded the vividly imaginative conception of a double transference, taken in the most literal sense; on the one hand, the assumption of manhood into Godhead in the Person of Christ in order that He might be 'made sin for us,' and, on the other hand, the consequence that believers might be 'made the righteousness of God in Him.' His doctrine of the real presence in the Eucharist also necessitated his belief in the ubiquity of our Lord's human nature, and, therefore, its being clothed with all the attributes of God. Hence, for Luther, the Incarnation gives effect to an essential manward movement in God, and an equally essential Godward movement in man. There is in each an immanent yearning to pass over into, and become, the other. This mutual yearning is satisfied in the Incarnation. Apart from exaggerated expressions and applications, Luther has hereby expressed a profound truth, which is essential to the doctrine of the Person of Christ.

III. The doctrine of the Person of Christ must do justice, as has been seen, both to the true Divinity and to the perfect humanity of our Lord. Hence, not only Christian faith, but Christian thought, is constrained to treat the Incarnation as a unique fact, which differentiates Christ, and must always differentiate Him, from mankind. Yet, while His self-consciousness and His claims, His character and influence, are unique, He is yet ideally human, not only in character and experience, but in the relationship to God which underlies them, and His influence is directed progressively to effect the realization of this ideal humanity in His people. His whole work seeks to bring manhood to its consummation in all men, through redemption and spiritual fulfilment. Hence the doctrine of the Person of Christ must recognize both

distinction and continuity in the Incarnation. The continuity is indeed essential to the distinction, for the consistency of God pervades and unifies the whole of His activity. He prepares the means for the accomplishment of His ends, and, in particular, He has so constituted humanity as to make it the organic means of His complete manifestation in 'the fullness of the times.' The Incarnation is so given to mankind as to spring up within their humanity, to be in complete congruity with it, and to bring it to ideal, and yet normative, fulfilment.

This union of distinction and continuity is completely and precisely expressed in the New Testament. To begin with, our Lord is presented as filled with the Spirit of God; the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, and the life of His people becomes Christian just in so far as so renewed, sanctified, and empowered by the indwelling of His Spirit that Christ is formed in them afresh. Nor is this all. The greatest Christological passages of the New Testament (John i. 1–18; Col. i. 15–18; Heb. i. 1–4) set forth man, and the universe, to which man organically belongs, as having been so created through, held together by, and directed towards the Son of God that His Incarnation and work are seen to be the consummate fulfilment, both in actuality and in promise, of all that has gone before. Thus the Incarnation brings the Son, not as an outsider to mankind, but into completed union with, and manifestation in, a home that He has prepared for Himself. What this involves will shortly appear.

IV. The incarnate Personality of Christ is One, Divine-human throughout. Any attempt to separate the Divine and the human in Him divides His Personality, contradicts the essential meaning of the Incarnation, and leads to speculation, which is not only, as Wesley reminded us, beyond the range of human competence, but, in proportion as it is abstract, turns thought aside from the living truth.

V. The Incarnation is held to involve the 'self-emptying' of the Son of God. Whole treatises have been

devoted to His *kenosis*, or depotentiation, or exinanition, as His self-emptying and humiliation have been variously called. Much of this discussion leads beyond the bounds of human thought; much of it involves an untenable separation between Christ, man, and the universe, and is, therefore, unreasonable; much of it involves a mistaken or, at all events, disproportioned use of abstract attributes in explaining the Being of God, and His relationship to the universe.

To begin with, if the doctrine of the great passages just referred to be accepted, how can the fulfilment, by the Incarnation, of the immanent end of the universe as a whole involve the suspension of the constitutive activity to which it owes its being, its unity, and its ordered development towards its end? And, in the next place, must not our conceptions of Divine omnipotence and omniscience, of the majesty and the sovereignty of God, just because they are human, and relative to the conditions of man's life within and by means of the universe, be inadequate to any adequate comprehension of the inmost life and the creative method of God? The declaration 'God is Love' must be as determinative of our thought as of our feeling, and, if this be true, what is called the self-limitation of God is necessary to His self-manifestation. Both reach their inseparable culmination in the Incarnation. What, however, is essential to the meaning of the Incarnation is to hold that, in becoming man, our Lord entered into human nature, as conditioned by the environment, the growth, and education through earthly experience, without which the entrance into human nature is both inconceivable and impossible.

VI. The Incarnation sets forth that the supreme spiritual values are humanly realized in Christ. It does more. It proclaims that these values are eternally and transcendently realized in God, and that, therefore, they are sovereign over the universe, the supreme end of the divine purpose and the immanent end in and for which all things exist. God is not only their eternal home, but

their perennial spring. That is to say that in the Son 'all things hold together,' and, therefore, using the language of time to set forth the secret of the Eternal, which is above time, 'He is before all things,' or, as the creed has it, 'Begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, Begotten, not made. Being of one substance with the Father, By whom all things were made.'

VII. Hence, finally, the doctrine of the Person of Christ, when its full meaning is taken into account, demands its own doctrine of God. Driven by the sheer necessities of thought that would do justice to the meaning of the universe as disclosed to men in the manifoldness of its unity, Platonic, Stoic, and Jewish thought had prepared the mould in which this new doctrine could be cast. God, because Personal, must include within the unity of His perfect Being, the fullness of all perfection in and for Himself, the energetic creativeness which goes forth in the self-giving that constitutes the universe, and (as is added by Christian thought) the satisfaction that returns upon and emphasizes itself in consummated actuality. Herein the facts of Christian faith and experience are expressed and accounted for. 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit' are the triune gift of a triune God. Put in another way, 'through Him'—namely, Christ Jesus—'we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father' (Eph. ii. 18). In these three, the facts of the Gospel, the experience of the Church, and the necessities of human thought, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is founded, and from these it has been developed. Augustine rendered immense service by illustrating and confirming the doctrine from the suggestions of human psychology and from the interpenetration of human personalities in society. The terms that have been used, 'Persons,' 'substance,' and the like, while important, are doubtless inadequate to the Divine reality, and the more rigidly precise they are made the more inadequate

they become. Yet without them, not only the Person of Christ, but the facts of the Gospel, and of its reflection in human experience, cannot be described, still less explained. They are essential to the description of the manifestation of God, and, therefore, to His Being. Without the doctrine of the Trinity, as Hegel perceived, the universe cannot be construed by thought. Without it, even the ascription of Personality to God becomes precarious. 'Baptism into the Name of the Lord Jesus' means baptism 'into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.' The Person of Christ displays in the perfect manhood of the Son the unity and Divine glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

IV

THE ATONEMENT

By W. F. Lofthouse, M.A., D.D.

The Christian Church has never formulated a doctrine of the Atonement. There has never been a controversy on the Atonement, like the controversy on the Person of Christ. The great Christological decisions of the fourth and fifth centuries resulted in a definition which, however to subsequent ages it has been in need of exposition and modification, may be said to have stood the test of all examination. 'Our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son . . . of one substance with the Father.' The chiselled clauses are brief and sententious; but they have won and kept their place in the creeds, as proving capable of finding room within their narrow compass for the results of all subsequent discussion that has not been generally felt to run counter to the New Testament; and any one who would find fault with them is at variance with the settled mind of the Christian Church. This is not to say that they contain the final truth about the mystery of Christ's Person; still less that they express that truth in the best possible way. Orthodoxy must not expect to claim finality. But when we are dealing with the Incarnation, we know what the best and most influential thinkers in the Christian Church have felt to be wise and safe to say about it.

Not so with the Atonement. The atoning work of our Lord has been discussed as vigorously as His Person, and, at least in the Western Church, a good deal more persistently; but the discussions have never been brought to a head. There is hardly a conceivable interpretation which cannot claim some high authority; there is no interpretation which can claim supremacy. 'Who for us men and

for our salvation came down from heaven . . . and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate.' We can go so far together; but no farther. Some would add, we can thus agree on the facts, but not the theory. This, however, is saying too much. For, properly speaking, 'for us' is theory and not fact. The fact, using the term for an historical event which can be reasonably held to have taken place, is that Jesus died on Calvary. That it was 'for us He hung and suffered there' is the interpretation, the conviction of faith. Whatever be the ground on which this conviction rests, it is not the ground of historical evidence.

It is indeed with these two words 'for us' that all the theories of the Atonement concern themselves. Granted that there is a connexion between Christ's death and our forgiveness or deliverance, how is that connexion to be expressed? The answers to this question have been legion. Hardly an independent thinker who has not had his own view of this mystery. But, in spite of this bewildering variety, we can discern the emergence of two main types. They are distinguished from one another by the fundamental divergence of what is required or hoped for by God. Does He want us to give Him something which we may withhold, or does He want us ourselves? Is He the Sovereign who demands tribute, fealty, submission, obedience to the law, reparation, or is He, in contrast, the Father who desires to rest in His children's co-operation?

It may be said that in the mere statement of these alternatives there lurks a fallacy: that an 'either . . . or' is always dangerous; that God is both a Sovereign and a Father; both an external authority and a Parent. True; God is something far greater than what may be expressed by our human categories, either as Sovereign or Father; but at the moment we are considering the theories that have actually been urged to express the Atonement; and this divergence is what we observe.

The large majority of views may be said to range themselves either by the side of Anselm or of Abelard. Either

they tell us that God rightly demands something from us which we have refused and that we must therefore make (directly, which is impossible, or indirectly, through Christ) the due reparation, or they tell us that God desires only one thing, 'the love of our worthless hearts,' and that He sent Jesus to make that complete devotion possible and natural.

In spite of the attempts at mediation, the difference between these two views is clear. It is equally clear that to the first some punishment, the infliction of some loss or damage or suffering, to make up for our disobedience, will be essential; and that in the other, punishment, if it is thought of at all, will be subordinate to the return of the prodigal to his Father's house. The supporters of the first view may speak of the authority of the Father; the supporters of the second may recognize that the Father is also the King. But in the first, call Him by what name you will, He asks for something distinct from ourselves; in the second, for ourselves as distinct from anything we can give or yield.

Between these two types, then, the Church has never formally decided. This is not to say that she has not been very near making up her mind. Indeed, the first type has been the more popular in every period; and much of the discussion which the historian of doctrine has had to trace, has not been discussion between the two types at all, but between varieties of the first. It may even be said that while the Church was still in a position to make an authoritative pronouncement, the struggle between the two types did not come to a head. There can be no doubt that in the Western Church, where interest in this great subject has been predominant, the former view, as we may call it, has often, in some shape or other, been almost unquestioned.

Let us express the matter a little more in detail. The view may be said to contain six elements: (*a*) Mankind has fallen: we have all sinned, not only individually, but racially. (*b*) Therefore we all deserve to die; for all sin is the infraction of God's commands, rouses His wrath,

and deserves nothing less than death. (*c*) To save us from this fate Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, died in our stead. He offered to God that obedience which we could not offer, and He endured what we could not endure, or were thus excused from enduring. (*d*) Thus it is possible for His righteousness to become ours, and for us to be regarded as innocent. (*e*) Hence, the eternal principle revealed long ago in the Mosaic law finds its fulfilment; namely that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. (*f*) Christ is thus the great sacrifice, as also, in virtue of His offering of Himself to death, He is the great priest for the sins of mankind.

This will at once be recognized as a statement, though not quite a complete statement, of the Protestant doctrine of the Atonement from the time of Luther on. But it is far older than Luther. It is in spirit, though not in actual language, the doctrine of Anselm; and it would express the views of Augustine and Tertullian. It even seems to be securely based on the words of Scripture. True, most schools of theologians would insist on making some addition to it. On the third head, for instance (Christ's death for us), early Fathers insisted that the debt which Christ paid in his sufferings was paid to the devil; and on the fourth head (our death), while the mediaeval and Roman Churches would teach that the merits of Christ could only be appropriated through the Church and its sacraments, the Protestants emphasize Luther's *sola fide*: if we believe that Christ died in our stead, His righteousness is imputed to us; but if we do not believe, not all the sufferings of Calvary nor all the rites of the Church can be of any use to us. The adherent of our second view may appeal to Abelard or to Bushnell, but he has the bulk of Western theological opinion against him. Either he must defend himself as St. Paul defended himself before the Sanhedrin, and claim the support of one half of his opponents on the points where they differ from the other, or else he must be prepared to challenge the whole position on the grounds of psychology, religion, or Scripture.

The view described above, so bold and so detailed, could never have held its place through nineteen centuries of Christian thought if it had not, in some profound way, met the requirements of the heart and the conscience. And this it certainly does, for it fixes the mind upon three thoughts, each of them inseparable from the genius of Christianity. The dreadful and terrible nature of sin—whether we contemplate all the sin that surges in the evil world around us, or the sin whose loathsome poison has infected our own being—which arises from its being sheer rebellion against the just and holy God ; the transcendent love and self-sacrifice of Christ, who was willing to undergo for us a suffering whose horror we could not even imagine ; and the sense of security and freedom from all further demands, that is gained through Him. These three thoughts are vital to Christianity ; and any interpretation of the death of Christ that is held to be inseparable from them will share their vitality.

Nevertheless, there are certain questions which this interpretation inevitably raises. First, what is meant by the words ' for us ' ? The preposition is ambiguous. Does it mean ' on our behalf,' or ' instead of us ' ? Both meanings can claim support in the New Testament, though the first is far more frequent (the New Testament language not being ambiguous in the same way) than the second. ' In my place condemned He stood.' Is it really possible to imagine this ? Punished—that is, made to suffer—instead of us ? yes, perhaps ; but—pronounced guilty ? How could this be when He was the very embodiment of innocence ? But in nearly all the relevant passages of the New Testament the writers, with greater caution, prefer to say that He suffered (*not*, was punished) *on our behalf* ; and the remaining passages are, to say the least, far from explicit.

Secondly, why was this suffering necessary for forgiveness ? Are we not expressly told that forgiveness will follow on repentance ? May we not hope that God, when His debtors have nothing to pay, frankly forgives them ?

Or will He tell them that repentance is not enough ; and, that unless they can give up something else, or induce someone else to offer an equivalent, pardon must be withheld ? It is intelligible that pardon might be withheld until the wrongdoer, however penitent, has been punished ; but is it intelligible that pardon could be made dependent on the transfer of that punishment to another ?

Thirdly, if Christ died instead of us, what is the relation between His death and ours ? For the death which He endured was physical, and the death from which we are saved is spiritual. Could the one be considered as in any sense the equivalent of the other ? Is mere physical death the consequence of sin ? In that case Christ's death has made no difference to any of us. Physical death awaits us all. Is the consequence of sin, then, to be thought of as spiritual death ? In that case, are we to say that the atoning death of Christ was spiritual death—i.e. the consciousness that (though perhaps only for a moment) He was separated from God ? But this is almost impossible. Even if we suppose that, in quoting the opening words of Psalm xxii. in His last dread moment on the cross, Jesus had forgotten the Psalm's triumphant conclusion, can we believe either that at the moment of His supreme obedience His Father turned away from Him, or that He imagined that He had lost the Father's love when it was still encircling Him ? The suggestion savours of irreverence, and worse. If Christ died instead of us, such questions must arise. They cannot be said to be answered or even contemplated in Scripture.

Fourthly, is there any real analogy between the death of Christ and the sacrifices on the Jewish altars, or between the blood shed on the cross and the blood that flowed from the throat of the bull or the goat when it was cut by the offerer ? Some of the Old Testament sacrifices, it is true, were ' for sin ' ; but the sin for which the offerings were presented were not sins in the proper sense of the word at all. They were ' unwitting sins,' as the Mosaic code makes perfectly clear. For sins committed deliberately

or with a 'high hand,' no sacrifice could avail. But no one has ever suggested that Christ died to annul the effects of unwitting sin; and, on the other hand, the New Testament writers (especially the most 'ritualistic' of them, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews) are convinced that Christ's death did what no sacrifice could do; so that His death, if it is called a sacrifice at all, differed in every respect from the sacrifices of the old Covenant.

The difficulties expressed in these questions are real, and, along with others, which need not here be raised, have often been urged in recent times. But they are unfamiliar to the mass of Christian people and to most Christian theologians. Nor is the reason far to seek. They do not affect the religious experience of the Church, whether Catholic or Protestant. Through all the ages, Christians who have taken their religion seriously have been for the most part satisfied with the Pauline statement, 'Christ died for our sins.' That is to say, they are conscious of some connexion between their actual conviction that their sins are forgiven and the contemplation of Christ's sufferings and death. They feel that without the latter the former could never have come about. This is as true for those who find the fact of His sufferings and death brought home to them through the rites of the Church as for those who rest on the thought of His supreme obedience and endurance, and who by faith make it their own, or regard it as the equivalent for what they could never have offered themselves. Somehow, whether they can provide their experience with a rationale or not, they know that they are no longer at enmity with God; that they can hear His pardoning voice; that at last, quite apart from anything else they have done, they are put in the right with God—'justified.' Beside the adoring rapture of the forgiven sinner in the presence of his Redeemer, such questions as we have suggested will be resented or silenced.

On the other hand, the preacher must not resent them. He cannot be satisfied with a 'somehow.' He must explain, even if his explanation will be forgotten or

unheeded. And what explanation could be simpler than what is implied by the forensic theory sketched above? The categories are all familiar, whether (to careful thought) they are applicable to God or not. We can all understand the position of the criminal in the dock, the judge who assesses the punishment, and the substitute who offers to pay the impossible and unimaginable debt. Whether Paul in his great passages on the Atonement was really thinking of the law-court, or whether we ought to think of God as dealing with mankind as if He was the Judge dealing with the prisoner at the bar, it is a simple thing to work out the forensic picture, and, once contemplated, it is impossible to escape from the imagery.

Moreover, the imagery seems to be required by the conscience. To think of sin is to think of guilt. Guilt implies the judge and the judge's condemnation. How can I be at ease until the debt is paid? And what profounder assurance can I have that the debt is paid and that I can now be at peace, than the conviction that Jesus paid it all —that all which I deserved to endure He endured in my stead? Whether this conviction can legitimately be deduced from Scripture or not, it can hardly ever cease to make its appeal.

We can thus understand why a conception which seems to lie open to such serious difficulties has for so long remained almost unchallenged. Most reformers, however daring their innovations, have changed as little as they could. This is certainly true of Luther. Few people recognize how much of the mass of mediaeval Catholic beliefs he took over: the whole conception of heaven and hell, the doctrine of the Trinity, the attributes of God, the fall of man, the authority of the Bible (however interpreted), and the general rationale of the Atonement. Indeed, it was only when a doctrine, or a book in the Bible, did not answer the requirements of faith as he understood it that he became critical and subversive. Much of what is attacked as 'Protestant narrowness' belongs to the mediaeval Church, or even to an earlier period. The same

thing can be said about the Wesleys and the Evangelical movement. Having taken one great step, the leaders of that movement were quite satisfied to go no further than they were forced. The one great step they took was the assertion of the assurance of salvation—the witness of the Spirit, and its consequences. Salvation itself, ' full and free,' was not an innovation, though it had been forgotten in the mediaeval and Anglican Church ; though assurance, a ' horrid notion ' to Butler, was no integral part of the teaching of the past. But in their doctrine of salvation, the Evangelicals saw no contradiction to the general doctrine of the Reformers. Moreover, they were so busy in urging the fear of the wrath to come, and the blessed results of Christ's death, that they had no time for what would have seemed a theoretical discussion. Indeed, their emphasis on sin and wrath, and on forgiveness as the free remission of all penalties and consequences, tended to lead to a further emphasis on the forensic elements in the plan of redemption. On the other hand, it must not be assumed too lightly that the Evangelicals were identified with what may be called the forensic view. It may be that they constantly employed forensic language and the metaphors of the law-courts ; but it does not follow that the categories in which they habitually thought were the categories of judge, prisoner, and substitute. The movement in which they were engaged was so large and so engrossing that they did not trouble to ask whether their language was consistent with their deeper convictions or even with itself. The questions detailed above therefore did not arise. They were equally sure of ' My God for ever pacified ' and of ' My God who died for me, for me.' Yet the questions must be asked ; we must attempt to arrive at some clear conception of the death of Christ—whether it was on ' our behalf ' or ' instead of us ' ; if only because Christ's death is so prominent in the New Testament, and because in these days the question is being asked with increasing insistence.

Let us, therefore, go back to our first statement of the

traditional conception of the Atonement and compare it with the New Testament. We may thus go on to ask how far the Evangelicals were really at one with it.

In the first place, we have to consider the effect of sin. Sin, both individually and universally, is indisputable. But sin, being universal as well as individual, is something more than a series of sinful actions. To say that the human race has fallen does not simply mean that every individual member of the race has committed sins continually; it means that there is something wrong, not only with the acts, but with the whole attitude of the race. Sin is a wrong attitude, a corrupt society into which every member of the race is born. Sin itself is thus not necessarily confined to what is deliberate; it is something much more mysterious. The sinful act is doubtless deliberate; but the sin into which men are born was there before the individual came to be. It influences his thoughts, his desires, his conduct; that is to say, the whole race is in the wrong with God. This, indeed, is the meaning of sin. It is the attitude which looks away from God instead of to Him. This is what Augustine saw—however repellent the language in which he expresses the matter—and what Pelagius failed to see. The great need of mankind, therefore, is to get in the right with God; to be justified. Few careful observers of human experience will seriously question this; for even those who have no interest at all in the theological doctrine of the fall of man cannot but be aware, when they have to pass any judgement, formal or informal, on others, that the responsibility for an act can hardly ever be confined to the agent. On the other hand, few are cynical enough to suggest that all men are wholly rogues, and that all virtue is but ingeniously veiled self-interest. No one believes that all men have committed sins that deserve capital punishment: but the turning away of the mind from God, even in the outwardly moral and virtuous, is a world-wide tragedy.

Thus, in the second place, sin is not something which may be said to *deserve* death. Sin, in the language of the

New Testament, *is* death. The task of the preacher is not to warn his hearers against the consequence of sin. He must not say to them, 'Go on sinning if you like, or if you are so foolish; but remember, the time will come when you will rue it.' His duty is to tell them what their sins mean here and now; separation from God, and therefore from all that is really worth having. Death is not the equivalent of capital punishment, either in the physical or the spiritual world. However virtuous a man is, his earthly life will come to an end sooner or later; but, to use the language of St. John, death is where faith is not; that is, faith—the confidence that flings itself on Christ for all that it needs—means life. But when a man looks to himself instead of to Christ, or when his ends are conceived without reference to the Father who sent the Son into the world, that is death. It is not a penalty, nor a consequence; it is a godless existence seen in the light of God's mind.

True, it rouses what may be spoken of as God's wrath; but His wrath is not like our human anger—resentment at a wrong done to us or to others which we instinctively desire to repay or revenge. His wrath, however we think of it as reacting jealously against the sin, is co-existent with a desire to restore the sinner, in repentance or an entire change of mind, into harmony with Himself. This is what we mean by love. Nor does His justice consist in giving His wrath its outlet, so to speak, or in inflicting suffering, however deserved, on us, but in bringing us back to our proper attitude of filial submission. Justice and love, in God, are one and the same thing.

Thus the purpose of God is not to punish men, but to commend His love to them even while they are sinners, and the work of Christ is not to save them from punishment which would bring no satisfaction to God. In the great Atonement passages in the New Testament punishment is never mentioned. The work of Christ is to accomplish their reconciliation with the Father, an achievement which is as dear to the Father as to Himself.

Thirdly, to do this, Christ died for us, or, as the Greek makes plain, on our behalf. That is, to Paul, the kernel and nerve of the gospel, the main thing that we have to declare. But what is meant by this death on our behalf? We have already seen that Christ's death cannot be understood as being instead of ours; when, therefore, we think of His death, do we think of the final moment on the cross when He gave up his breath, of the three hours' darkness, or the entire passion from Gethsemane onwards, or the whole space of His Life, begun long before the moment when He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and when the shadow of the cross fell across His path? It is difficult to stop here; for all will agree that what gives Calvary its importance was not that it witnessed the death of a good man, a hero, or a martyr, but that it witnessed *His* death—the death of the Son of God, of One who had lived a life of perfect obedience, and whose life had convinced men that He bore a special and unique relation with God. It was the death of One who came to do God's will, and, having allowed not even the horror and the shame of the cross to deter Him, showed His followers that He was still alive—risen from the dead. It is noteworthy that Paul himself hardly ever mentions Christ's death without speaking in the same breath of the resurrection, and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is at one with the rest of the New Testament in laying stress, not on any act which brought about the physical death of Christ, but on the union of obedience and endurance in His life, as in the immortal picture of the 'suffering servant' in Isaiah liii.

What Christ did 'for us,' then, was not merely to allow His life to be taken from Him at the final crisis on Calvary, but to discharge from beginning to end the commission, the mandate, which His Father laid on Him. On all this His death (which, regarded from a merely human point of view, He might so easily have avoided) set its triumphant seal; and it thus opened the way to that enduring life into which He rose. To think of His death in any

other way is inevitably to be led into difficulties which cannot be said, as far as theologians are concerned, to be undeserved; for indeed, it cannot be thought of in any other way without either coming perilously near the assumption (surely the most dangerous of heresies) that there was something in the mind of the one that was not present in the mind of the other; or else reducing the whole action of the Atonement to a transaction at once unconvincing and unreal.

We cannot understand the death of Christ unless we regard it as of a piece with His whole life; on the other hand, the special emphasis laid on His death by the New Testament writers is perfectly intelligible. They never referred, save in the Gospel narratives, to the horrible details. All of them, even Paul, shrank from that most sinister and odious word 'cross'; but the tragedy of His last hours made, as it must always make, an immense emotional appeal, beside which any other single instance of His obedience, or all of them put together, must grow pale.

Fourthly, this whole life of obedience, seen at its profoundest and most impressive in its last earthly hours, is the object of faith; or, rather, the object of faith is Christ Himself. Faith justifies, 'sets us right,' with God; it brings us into the attitude of sons; it completes our reconciliation to the Father. When we see Christ, like the 'suffering servant' of Isaiah liii, bearing the dreadful burden of the shame of our sin, making Himself one with us, alienated as we are from God, and appealing to us to return to the Father who loves us as He loves the Son Himself, He rouses, as nothing else could rouse, our confidence. To regard ourselves as God's children, when we know that we are aliens, might well be impossible. But when He bids us repent, change our minds, be reconciled to His Father, vouching by the appeal of His own coming into our midst that we shall be received, a new confidence springs up within us; we can rely on Him; we come to the Father as sons, and as sons we are accepted. Our faith has set us right with God.

But, fifthly, this faith does not remove punishment, with which neither God nor we (as we have seen) are properly concerned. It moves in a different sphere. The consequences of our evil acts (for others as well as ourselves) may and do remain. The consequences of alienation, in itself, come to an end when the alienation, as we return to God, ceases to be. Nor does faith cause anything non-existent to be imputed to us, or induce God to regard what has been as if it had not been. It removes sin. Sin is forgiven, 'sent away,' when we come to God as men who are repentant, whose attitude has changed, and when we rely—have faith—on Christ, to be accepted and to live henceforth as sons in their Father's house. Righteousness is misconceived if we regard it as the equivalent of moral conduct, or as the mood from which such conduct arises. Its underlying meaning in the Old Testament and the New Testament alike is—being right with God. The centre of the New Testament conception of the relation between God and man is that we are right with Him when we conceive ourselves as His sons. From such a conception all the virtues will follow; more important, there will follow the supreme attitude of love, the abandonment of ourselves to the purpose of God and the highest ends of His creation. Our faith can change God's mind as little as could the death of Christ. But it puts us in the position where His forgiveness is possible, and where His love shines upon our hearts. The Father is thus 'propitiated.' This is not to say that Christ appeased Him. How could this be possible when it was the Father's redeeming love for us that sent Christ into our midst? But He can now be propitious to us; that is, He can receive us into those frank, filial relations to Himself which, when we were still alienated, were impossible.

And, sixthly, this conception of the Atonement as reconciliation, the reconciliation of lost wanderers to a Father achieved through the obedience of One who came to share His Sonship with us, will enable us to assess correctly the sacrificial language of the New Testament. To speak

of Christ as a sacrificial victim, or a priest at the altar, is a metaphor, as it is a metaphor to speak of Him as a ransom-price paid for a slave, or as an advocate in the law-court. To Jews, accustomed to the sacrifices in the Temple, it would be a natural metaphor. Yet they were strangely chary of using it. The term sacrifice is hardly ever applied to Christ. The reason, however, is not difficult to discover. As a means of forgiveness, the Jewish sacrifices were known to be useless. The sins for which they were offered, as we have seen, were 'unwitting'; in our sense, they were not sins at all. The man who was oppressed by a guilty conscience knew, if he knew his Old Testament at all, that God demands something else from him, namely, a contrite heart. Now deliverance from this oppression was primarily what Christ accomplished; that is to say, Christ did what the sacrifices, by instructed Jews, were never thought of as doing. On the other hand, these unwitting sins, for which the sacrifices were thought to avail, raised a barrier between God and man. Defilement, though it was a merely external thing, did prevent (as the Jew felt) complete communion with God. And that barrier, such as it was, was removed by sacrifice. When, then, the greatest barrier of all, the barrier of the alienation of sin, was felt to be completely removed by Christ, it was quite natural that Christ should be thought of as a kind of super-sacrifice. He is also thought of, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as a kind of super-priest, who did what the high priest could never have done.

But the one sacrificial term which is generally used in connexion with Christ is His *blood*. In the old sacrificial rites it was the blood rather than the mere death of the victim that was important; the blood 'made the atonement'; the blood was sprinkled on the altar, because the blood (such was the liturgical axiom) 'was the life.' When, therefore, a Jew like Peter or John or Paul was led to associate the imagery of the altar in any sense with his thought of Christ, he naturally fixed on what was the chief element of the praxis of the

altar, the shedding of the blood, not as a sign of the victim being killed, or a symbol of the victim's physical agony appeasing an angry Deity, but of the setting free of the animal's life, making it available for the offerer. But this was exactly what did happen to the Christian through Christ. He had been dead; for what was alienation and disobedience, to his awakened conscience, but death? Now he was alive; but that life had only become possible through the activity, the personality, of Christ. If what constituted the life, the self, so to speak, of the victim, its blood, had flung down the old barrier of unwitting sin for the Jew, it was the very heart of Christ's obedience and redeeming love that had flung down, before the sinner, the barrier that had meant his misery and ruin. How natural, then, for him to think and speak of the blood of Christ, when he knew himself to be redeemed and delivered from the tyranny of that alienation, the reign of sin, by the blood, the very life, of Christ.

Natural; and yet rare. For the actual texts which contain the word 'blood,' though among the most familiar and the most frequently quoted, are almost as rare as the terms 'sacrifice' and 'cross.'[1] If we hear them used constantly in the language of devotion, we must not forget the evidence of the concordance. There is, however, one image that is constantly emphasized in the New Testament. It is that of the 'suffering servant'; Isaiah liii. is quoted with striking frequency. It is alluded to even oftener, and if we seek for a passage which, short of actual reference to the Redeemer as the Son of God, embodies the august conception of the reconciliation and deliverance of the sinner through the awful yet triumphant bearing of his sin at the divine behest, we find it there, more explicitly than anywhere else, perhaps, in the whole of Scripture. And inasmuch as sin is not a matter of the sinful acts of individuals merely, but of human society, of the whole race, Christ is seen to be

[1] The word is not used more than eight times, by Paul, of the Atonement, and only in three passages in the Johannine writings.

the Redeemer of mankind. He who was led as the lamb to the slaughter-house, the Lamb of God, bears, takes away, the sin of the world. The obedience of the Eternal Son, consummated in our human time on Calvary, has delivered mankind from the alienation, the death of sin.

We have thus examined the six elements into which we analysed the traditional doctrine of the Atonement. That doctrine we felt to embody the fundamental conception that God requires something of us. But we have seen, as we have taken one step after another, that it is really ourselves which God requires ; not that we should pay something, or surrender something, but that we should *become* something. Indeed, these various elements have only been intelligible to us when we have interpreted them in this way ; when we have regarded them as steps in the great process of reconciliation, the end of which is not that an outraged God should receive from some source, however holy, the tribute or satisfaction which the wrongdoers had withheld ; but that the Father should Himself receive, as His children, the erstwhile wanderers and foes brought back by His Son.

It is clear that such a view of reconciliation is inconsistent with a great deal of the familiar language both of theologians and of popular piety. We must cease to imagine that Jesus ever said ' I'll bear the punishment instead.' We must be very careful how we speak of God as being pacified or satisfied. Neither of these terms belong to the vocabulary of the New Testament. We cannot say, as even Origen more than suggests, that Christ gave His soul as a ransom to the Evil One, who had us in his power until that ransom, the life of Jesus, was paid to him. Nor shall we say with Aquinas that the the passion of Christ was, not only a sufficient, but a superabundant satisfaction for the sins of the human race. Doubtless, if God had desired satisfaction in that sense, He could have found it by weighing the sufferings of Christ in the balance against our sins ; but who, with the New Testament before him, could conceive of God as

so employed, or could even imagine that there is any common ground between suffering and sin? Luther himself was quite disposed to press the idea of substitution. Christ died instead of us, he says, and therefore His obedience was instead of ours. 'The law has been fulfilled,' that is, by Christ, so that it is not necessary for us to fulfil it, but only to adhere and be conformed to Him who fulfils it. To suppose that Luther deduced from this that our conduct, either before or after the reconciliation, was unimportant, would be grotesque; but his doctrine of vicariousness is as far from the spirit of the New Testament as are Calvin's words that Christ was sent as a Mediator to satisfy God by the effusion of His blood.

But what of our English Evangelical movement, and of the teachings of the two Wesleys, without whom, as most admit, the Evangelical movement would never have come about? That the Wesleys, like the majority of the Anglicans of their time, were Arminians, is undoubted. Moreover, the Wesleys held firmly that Christ died for all, and that through faith in Him all could find salvation. But which of our two types of doctrine did they hold? Did they regard God as requiring something from us or something to be paid on our behalf, or as desiring the love of our own hearts?

If one could conceive the question being asked of them, they would probably, at least in the first moment, have refused to see the distinction. But no one can deny that much of what they wrote supports the former alternative. Let us refer in the first place to the hymns, written for the most part by Charles Wesley, but recognized—authorized, as we might say—by his brother. Scant justice is rendered to these remarkable productions by the statement that Charles Wesley wrote some of the greatest and most popular hymns of the English language; to understand their poetic and devotional quality, the intolerance of the superfluous word, the music of harmonious sounds, the carefully chosen phrases, the absence of

sentimentality and artifice that is characteristic of them at their best, they must be read in bulk. Naturally, they are unequal, and the warm piety of the eighteenth century will often offend the sobriety of the twentieth; but, for profound ideas expressed in simple, choice and moving language, Charles Wesley will more than hold his own with any devotional writer in our literature.

Now, when we turn to the hymns that deal with the Atonement, it would seem at first that Wesley's thought conforms to what we have called the first type. We read constantly of God offended and pacified; Christ has offered Himself as a sacrifice; His blood atones for a sinful race. Indeed, references to Christ's blood are relatively far more frequent than the usage of the New Testament might be said to authorize, and the verses in which the word occurs certainly pass beyond the sober and restrained language of Paul into a wealth of metaphor that is as foreign to his thought as to ours. Divine justice would condemn us as unable to pay our debt. We have no merits of our own; we cannot escape from the wrath of God. But Christ interposes; He intercedes for us; He dies. He 'pleads His passion on the tree.' Here we have almost the whole vocabulary of traditional theology; the only term we miss is propitiation. Perhaps the reasons for the absence of this term, which must have been often in the writer's mind, are at least in part metrical.

The vocabulary is there; many a stanza would have completely satisfied the stoutest of Lutherans. But Charles Wesley, like John, had felt the influence of German pietism; and he had felt something else, which he had found as little in the Pietists as in the followers of Luther. The experience of his conversion did not drive out the old terminology or the categories of thought which that terminology expressed; but it introduced a new element, which began by producing an unconscious inconsistency, and ended by working a transformation. For after his conversion his three dominating ideas were—

that the Father's love had sent the Son ; that sin, rather than its penalties (about which he says but little), was removed by Christ's death ; and that faith in Christ assured for him, then and there, all that God from the beginning had designed to give. Thus, it is his Father who is ' pacified ' and whose ' justice lingers into love.' True, he writes that Christ's ' feeble flesh abhorred to bear the wrath of an Almighty God ' ; yet He came ' from above, the pure celestial fire to impart ' ; and though I am ' a child of wrath and hell,' it is the Father's love which he bids me not to slight. Christ's intercession cannot be denied, because He and the Father are indissolubly one. If God is offended, He does not wait for the rebels to pay their tribute ; He sends an ambassador to them. His Son is crucified ' to bring us rebels back to God.' The ' slaves of sin and hell ' are bidden to receive their liberty. God, the Maker and the Spirit, pleads with sinners. ' Why will ye die ? ' The Father is implored to make known how merciful He is, and the Saviour who died is as much ' my God ' as the Father who sent Him to the cross.

The inconsistency is clear ; but it is not the inconsistency of a puzzled theology, but of a profound conviction. Charles Wesley was writing for and of himself ; but he was also writing of and for others ; men who, like himself in religious consciousness, but unlike himself in their previous moral history, had felt themselves sinners, and had lived or had come to live in dread of the anger their sin deserved. The scriptural references to wrath were borne out by a hundred modern instances. But the point which will impress those who can appreciate both a writer's speech and his silence is that what, for Tertullian and Origen and Aquinas and Luther, follows on the wrath, is never mentioned. Wesley never, apparently, asked to whom the debt was paid ; nor what it was that appeased God ; nor how Christ's sufferings came to be the equivalent for our sin ; nor what was the relation of our faith to our conduct, past or future. From first to last it was ' the stupendous height of heavenly love ' which dominated

His thought. The incarnate God had come to make the spirit of the sinner His radiant shrine.

And here the two brothers are entirely at one. It would be impossible to summarize the voluminous prose works of John, far more voluminous than his brother's poetry. Let us simply turn to the sermons that are recognized, in the society which he founded, as containing the essence of his teaching. In these he guessed as little as his brother that he was introducing a new conception into English theology. But, like his brother, where he uses the old terms, he joins them to a new emphasis on the redeeming work of Christ; and what would neutralize this emphasis he silently omits. For instance, faith is a trust in the merits of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. We *are* (not shall be) 'saved (to comprise all in one word) from sin.' By this faith we receive the spirit of adoption, that is, of sonship. Wesley, too, quotes at length Isaiah liii.; in view of the fact that Christ has tasted death for every man, God has reconciled the world, or, as Wesley says immediately after, is reconciled to all the world. The view of Origen about the devil is repudiated as unscriptural, as also is the doctrine that, in justification, God accounts men otherwise than what they are. Wesley does indeed speak of Christ as being punished for our sins (this, he says, is the meaning of Christ's being made sin for us); but it is still true that God was, in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. Christ, again, has paid the price for us (the price which the covenant of Adam required us to pay for ourselves); and propitiation is spoken of both as that which Christ gave himself to be, and as that which Christ was set forth to be by God. In describing the difference before and after faith, Wesley employed the schematic language of Paul; before, a man is in helpless bondage; after, he sees the light of the glorious love of God in the face of Jesus Christ, as his whole soul cries out 'My Lord and My God.' The result is new and indescribable joy; but this joy (Wesley could never forget the importance of conduct) is 'joy

in obedience, that is, in loving God and keeping His commandments' ; not as a new régime of works, but as the inevitable result of the new sonship.

Here, too, as in the hymns, the reader searches in vain for the specific theological ideas of the Greek fathers or of the mediaeval schoolmen. Wesley is convinced (for his own memory instructed him) that there could be no acceptable works before faith ; and the Bible, rather than the theologians, had taught him that where God was not obeyed the rebel was worthy of death. How easily he might have advanced from this point to Anselm or Calvin. He did not. Instead, he fell back, for the most part, on the words of Scripture. He quotes, but he seldom stops to expound ; and if we would conjecture what his expositions would have been, we must observe the passages he habitually selects. These are the passages which assert that God sent His Son to bear our sin, to be the Saviour of the world, that we might be reconciled, as His sons through faith, to Himself. He might use the traditional terminology. He might even speak occasionally of Christ as punished for us, or of God's anger being removed through Christ's death, of God being reconciled to us. But these expressions, at most relatively rare, must be interpreted, or obliterated, by what is familiar and normal in his thought ; namely, that God is the Father of men, and that in His love He sent His Son to be our free and full salvation.

The Methodist leaders of the Evangelical movement did not simply revive Luther and Calvin. They were not the *epigoni* of the Reformers. They may have taken over, uncritically, much that the Reformers themselves were content to receive from the earlier Catholic theology. But these conceptions never penetrated to the centre, the citadel, of their thought. Here, a view of the purpose of God at once milder and more urgent held undisputed sway ; and their unwavering loyalty to this dweller in the innermost made them the heralds of a new movement in Christendom and in the world.

V

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

By A. L. Humphries, M.A.

No statement of Methodist teaching, whether the time brought under review be the present or the past, could be regarded as truly interpreting the soul of Methodism if it passed over the place which that movement has assigned to the Holy Spirit. Of Methodism itself as a product of the Spirit there is no need to speak. Its influence upon the religious life of England in the eighteenth century, expanded as that influence has since become to an evangelistic ministry almost world-wide in its range, is beyond dispute an evidence of the activity of that Spirit who is ever prompting the Church to new ventures of faith and work. Moreover, J. R. Green says truly that 'the Methodists themselves were the least result of the Methodist revival.' Apart from its influence upon other Churches and its cleansing of public morals, that revival created a social conscience which led to reform of the prisons, the campaign for the abolition of slavery, and an attempt, which has persisted into the present, to redress social wrongs and alleviate the lot of the suffering and oppressed. Indirectly, also, the passionate evangelism which in John Wesley took the world as its parish, caused the Christian Churches of England to look beyond the bounds of the home-land, and to bring the heathen abroad within the ambit of their labours and message. It is thus that Methodism stands justified to itself and before the world as a veritable creation of the Spirit of God.

I

Our present concern, however, is less with that aspect of truth than with the manner in which the Holy Spirit, viewed as a manifestation of the divine activity, found expression in the faith and experience of Methodism. The two sides of the expression are closely knit together. In so far as Methodism can claim to have a theology of the Spirit, its doctrine has been practical rather than speculative. Its supreme interest has been in the work of the Spirit in the human soul, His activity in creating and nourishing religious life. It seems remarkable that Wesley in his *Notes on the New Testament*, when commenting on our Lord's command to His disciples to baptize in the triune Name and on the threefold benediction used by St. Paul in 2 Cor. xiii. 12, makes not the slightest reference to the doctrine of the Trinity which those passages may be said to teach. In the sermon, too, entitled 'Scriptural Christianity,' delivered at St. Mary's, Oxford, and notable as the last which Wesley was permitted to preach before the University, though his text was 'And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost,' the whole burden of his searching message is concerned with the fruits which the Spirit, if present in the soul, should bear in disposition and life. In all this, however, there is nothing to create surprise. It reflects a characteristic of Methodism. The Primitive Methodist Church, in its Deed Poll, after a general reference to its doctrinal standards, proceeds at a later point to a brief enumeration of the doctrines which it regards itself as teaching. But though the Holy Spirit is referred to twice, both references relate to religious experience, and, by what some have been disposed to regard as a providential oversight, the work of the Holy Spirit in inspiration and revelation is wholly ignored. It would be wrong, however, to infer from these facts indifference on the part of Methodism to speculative theology and its problems. Methodism has faced those problems and has sought to contribute in its measure to

their solution. But that was not the interest which called Methodism into being. It is a truism to say that Methodism had its birth in an experience. That memorable hour on May 24, 1738, when John Wesley felt his heart 'strangely warmed,' saw in the assurance of the divine forgiveness then received, and the passion kindled thereby, the impulse which created Methodism. Hence the theology which the new movement stressed revolved round the experience of salvation. The Cross of Christ as revealing the redemptive purpose of God, and the Holy Spirit as applying to the soul the saving virtue of Christ, were its exultant themes. These did not exhaust its faith. Indeed, the very confidence with which those two great affirmations were made had its roots in an implicit theology of both Christ and the Spirit. On the principle that He who does a divine work must be Himself divine, Christ the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit the Sanctifier, were each assigned a place within the Godhead. Their divine quality was not so much asserted as assumed. Moreover, Methodism through John Wesley, a child of the Anglican Church, naturally took over the evangelical truths reflected in the Protestant faith. These facts explain why Methodism, viewed historically, made practically no contribution to theology. It stressed certain aspects of truth: it even in one case, as we shall see, re-asserted a truth which had been forgotten. But its interest was always in life more than truth—or, rather, in truth which was creative of life. That is why what it had to say concerning the Holy Spirit narrows itself down to His work in conveying to the soul the forgiving grace of Christ and in producing the virtues of a holy nature and life.

II

For its specific teaching, therefore, concerning the Holy Spirit we must turn, first of all, to what Methodism had, and has, to say as to the beginning of religious life in the soul. That dawn, of course, has certain human

conditions, the one on which Wesley, true to his Protestant heritage, was most insistent being faith, a sure trust in the pardoning mercy of God. But however the experience be described, whether it be called conversion or the new birth, it is supernaturally produced, it represents an achievement of God through the Spirit. In his sermon on 'The New Birth,' Wesley distinguishes between justification, which he interprets as 'that great work which God does *for us* in forgiving our sins,' and the new birth, which he regards as 'the great work which God does *in us* in renewing our fallen nature.' But, he adds, 'In order of *time* neither of these is before the other; in the moment we are justified by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Jesus, we are also "born of the Spirit"; but in order of *thinking*, as it is termed, justification precedes the new birth. We first conceive His wrath to be turned away, and then His Spirit to work in our hearts.' In other words, the change in the sinner's standing before God involved in forgiveness is accompanied by a change of nature, a rebirth of the soul wrought by the Spirit of God.

To speak thus is, of course, to use the language of figure, but it is a use for which we have precedent in Jesus Himself. In his midnight talk with Nicodemus He stressed the necessity of a rebirth if a man would enter that new order of life and experience known as 'the Kingdom of God.' Viewed from the standpoint of its cause, the change in the soul was a birth 'from above.' The creative factor in its happening was the Spirit, though in one passage Jesus declares this rebirth to be 'of water' as well as 'of the Spirit.' There the undoubted reference is to the part which baptism may play in spiritual renewal. A later New Testament writer has the same thought in mind when he speaks of 'the laver of regeneration,' though he is careful to add, 'and renewing of the Holy Spirit.' What Methodism holds as to the doctrine of 'baptismal regeneration,' which has been deduced from those sayings, can be examined later. Meanwhile, it

is the element of mystery in the soul's rebirth which Jesus stresses. He finds an analogy for it in the wind, elusive in both its coming and going. The mystery is there because the Agent is divine. It might seem at first as though this mystery, if not wholly removed, had in recent times been greatly relieved. Methodist thinkers, in common with all earnest students of religious experience, gladly confess the debt they owe to psychologists like William James, Starbuck, and others, for the light which they, from their point of view, have thrown upon what we call conversion. They have adduced parallels to it in realms other than religious. They have analysed the experience, exhibited it to us, so to speak, in process. What they, using the language of their own science, have interpreted conversion or the new birth to be is the reorganization of a man's inner personality round a new centre, the initiating factor being the rise into ascendancy of some new thought or intense emotion, the dynamic energy thus directed upon the will being so compelling as to change the inner life of thought, feeling, and desire, and, in consequence, to transform the outer conduct. We can be grateful for this scientific exposition. After all, the phrase 'the new birth' is but a figure, and analysis of the experience it has been used to describe does not disprove the reality of the experience itself. Moreover, psychology, while explaining the form of conversion, leaves its cause unexplained. That means that the mystery of it remains.

> We cannot kindle when we will
> The fire which in the heart resides;
> The Spirit bloweth and is still,
> In mystery our soul abides.

The mystery of the experience remains, just because the agency of its happening is divine. 'Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?' There is often something startling and unaccountable in the approach of the Spirit to the human soul. In an hour that a man thinks not He cometh. He uses some

awakened memory or calls into action some new motive, and so finds access to the springs of willing and action, thus making it true that a sinner is never safe from God nor from the lingering good within him to which the Spirit can appeal. To be reborn is to be born of the Spirit.

We are thus able to hold the old faith, even though we come to it along a changed route or express it in a new way. But we hold it also with certain additions. The Methodist doctrine of conversion, as we find it in Wesley and elsewhere, was framed largely with men and women in view who had been, or needed to be, reclaimed from a sinful life and restored to fellowship with God. To such people conversion meant a break with an old life, and one often so swift and revolutionary in character as to represent a memorable and dramatic crisis. We have come to a larger understanding of the ways of God with the human soul. The wind of the Spirit can be gentle and seductive in its approach as well as sudden and turbulent. That which matters is not how it comes, but what it achieves. Souls can grow into Christ's kingdom as well as take it by violence. The atoll in the far Pacific may have risen above the sea through the strangely slow and prolonged activity of coral insects, or it may have been thrown up from the depths in some tremendous volcanic upheaval. What matters is that an island has come to exist as an arena for nature and a home for man. Modern psychology, in its discussion of religious experience, has distinguished between the 'once-born' and the 'twice-born.' The 'once-born' are those who grow as by a natural instinct into true thoughts of God and a right disposition towards Him. They do not pass to this by way of a deep consciousness of sin. God is never to them an object of dread. Their hearts open to Him as the flower to the sun, and their entrance upon religion is as happy as its process is unperceived. 'I always knew God loved me,' says one writer, in reviewing his religious experience, 'and I was always grateful to Him for the world He placed me in. I always liked to tell Him so, and was always glad to

receive His suggestions to me.' That is religion as it emerges in the 'once-born' or the 'healthy-minded.' But there are also the 'twice-born,' to whom religious life comes by way of a crisis, taking the form of deliverance from a haunting sense of sin. They are 'sick' souls, who seek and find in religion the way of health. Religious biography, needless to say, abounds in instances of this type. They were the only type of which early Methodism took any account. It preached a gospel of deliverance, and it called men to take refuge from their sins in Christ. It was a true gospel, and it still needs to be faithfully proclaimed. But we modern Methodists take a wider view of the ways of the Spirit. We have in all our Churches multitudes of young people, blessed from their first breath with Christian homes, in contact from childhood with the teaching and influence of the Church, and, though from these what we speak of as 'decision for Christ' is required, even as it is from those persons who turn to Him from a life of sin, yet the 'decision' of the former need not follow the same process as that of the latter, or have the same accompaniments. It is the fact of the 'decision,' however reached, which is vital. As William James says, speaking of the two types: 'The final consciousness which each type reaches of union with the divine has the same practical significance for the individual; and individuals may well be allowed to get to it by the channels which lie most open to their several temperaments.' Thus does the Methodism of to-day interpret the work of the Spirit in man's experience of conversion.

As to the significance of baptism for the same experience, what is certain is that Methodists do not hold the doctrine of 'baptismal regeneration.' They have rejected it from the first. John Wesley sharply distinguished between regeneration or the new birth, an inward work of the Spirit, and baptism, its outward sign. He agreed that 'the outward sign duly received is always accompanied with the inward grace.' But how important he felt

that qualification, ' duly received,' to be appears from his definite pronouncement in the sermon on ' The New Birth ' already referred to. ' As the new birth,' says he, ' is not the same thing with baptism, so it does not always accompany baptism; they do not constantly go together. A man may possibly be " born of water," and yet not be born " of the Spirit." There may sometimes be the outward sign where there is not the inward grace.' Notable too as confirming this impression of Wesley's mind is the fact that, in the revised version of the Articles of the Anglican Church which he published, he allows, quoting the Anglican Article, that baptism is ' a sign of regeneration, or the new birth,' but omits the words which follow, ' whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the Church.' Thus did Wesley safeguard the realities of religious experience, and refuse to allow to a rite, valuable as it is as an outward sign, the regenerating virtue which belongs wholly and solely to the Spirit of God. Where Wesley stood, so also do his followers.

III

But the Holy Spirit does more than introduce us to the regenerate state; it attests our possession of it. That, according to St. Paul, is a familiar function of the Spirit. ' The Spirit Himself,' says he, ' beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God.' The reassertion of this doctrine, commonly described as the doctrine of Assurance, has justly been regarded as the chief contribution of Methodism to Christian theology. To us it seems strange that a doctrine so indubitably Pauline should ever have been forgotten, or, when revived, should have excited antipathy or doubt. But both of these apparent improbabilities actually occurred. Roman Catholicism practically denied the doctrine. Indeed, for that Church to have allowed that a penitent sinner could know, through the direct testimony of the Spirit of

God, that his sins were forgiven, would have run counter to its notions of sacramental grace and salvation by merit, and would have involved the supersession of all the priestly machinery which Romanism thrust between the soul and God. 'No one,' said the Council of Trent, 'can know with a certainty of faith which cannot be subject to illusion that he has obtained the grace of God.' Calvinism held a similar view, but on different grounds. Upon any confidence in personal salvation lay the dark shadow of the supposed immutable decrees. Knowledge of the elect belonged only to the secret counsels of God, and how could any man be sure that he was of the favoured number save by some special and external revelation? Any inner impression might be so of the nature of illusion that Calvin visualizes the 'constant struggle of the faithful with their own distrust.' The godly might attain to the hope of salvation, not to the assurance of it. In England, however, Protestant divines, like Baxter, Chillingworth, and Pearson, clearly asserted the doctrine of Assurance. Nothing, for example, could be more definite than Pearson's declaration: 'It is the office of the Holy Ghost to assure us of the adoption of sons, to create in us a sense of the paternal love of God toward us, to give us an earnest of our everlasting inheritance. As, therefore, we are born again by the Spirit, so we are also assured by the same Spirit of our adoption.' Bunyan, too, held that belief, and hence depicts Christian as receiving at the Cross from the third Shining One 'a roll with a seal upon it, which he bid him look on as he ran, and that he should give it in at the celestial gate.' In the sequel this seal, 'the assurance of his life,' was lost, and the pilgrim was in great distress till it was regained.

For some strange reason—either because evangelical pulpits were silent on the doctrine, or because of the chill that the popular Deism cast upon the confidence and joy of religion—in the period which followed Bunyan the doctrine of Assurance passed under eclipse, save in Moravian and Quaker circles. Bishop Butler, uncertain,

as the familiar story about him reminds us, even on his death-bed, as to the fact of his personal salvation, was typical of the Anglicanism of his day. It was John Wesley who restored the doctrine of the Witness of the Spirit to its place in the evangelical faith, and, in restoring, emphasized it. It was in the Methodist message from the first. John Wesley, when his heart was 'strangely warmed,' felt also 'an assurance' of the divine forgiveness. And what the heart felt, the tongue forthwith confessed. 'I then,' says Wesley, 'testified openly to all there, what I now first felt in my heart.' Nor was the thing confessed a passing impression, for Wesley, looking back to that hour in the sober light of after days, said: 'The Spirit itself bore witness to my spirit that I was a child of God, gave me an evidence thereof, and I immediately cried, Abba, Father.' Obviously Methodism, if only because of the value it attached to the facts of experience, could not be silent on such a vital truth. On the contrary, it joyfully proclaimed it, and men as joyfully received it. Indeed, the Arminian faith of Wesley—that is, his belief that all men could be saved—when it was supplemented in Methodist preaching by the glad assertion that men, when saved, could know that their sins were forgiven, accounts more than any other fact for the joy, reaching almost to rapture, which accompanied the new-found life of Methodist converts of the early days—a joy which can never be absent from a Methodism which remains true to its essential witness. And what was in the message of Methodism naturally appears in its hymnology. Charles Wesley, in what may be described as the first Methodist lyric, since it was composed on the day after he too, like his brother John, had passed into the light of conscious salvation, sings with rapturous wonder,

> Should know, should feel my sins forgiven,
> Blest with this antepast of heaven!

And, in the well-known hymn in which the Holy Spirit is invoked as the 'Spirit of faith,' Methodists sing:

'Tis Thine the blood to apply,
And give us eyes to see,
Who did for every sinner die,
Hath surely died for me.

O that the world might know
The all-atoning Lamb!
Spirit of faith, descend, and show
The virtue of His name;

Inspire the living faith
Which whosoe'er receives,
The witness in himself he hath,
And consciously believes.

Such songs sounded a new note in religion, and, inasmuch as the lips of even the humblest converts learnt to sing them, Pharisaic religionists professed themselves shocked at this outrage on the decencies of religion. Wesley, in his *Journal* (under date June 25, 1745), tells an almost incredible story of the arrest of Edward Greenfield, a tinner, of St. Just, in Cornwall—a man who three years before had been 'eminent for cursing, swearing, drunkenness, and all manner of wickedness,' but had since become remarkable for a quite contrary behaviour.

'I asked a little gentleman at St. Just what objection there was to Edward Greenfield. He said, "Why, the man is well enough in other things; but his impudence the gentlemen cannot bear. Why, sir, he says he knows his sins are forgiven!" And for this cause he is adjudged to banishment or death.'

Could anything show more conclusively how completely the Pauline doctrine of Assurance had faded from the evangelical faith before Methodism restored it?

IV

Students of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, as it is unfolded in the New Testament, will need no reminder that one field in which a special operation of the Spirit was discerned was that of 'tongues' and other abnormal

phenomena. The first Christian Pentecost saw these manifestations, but they were exhibited in a more varied and continuous manner in the Church at Corinth, and one of the problems which St. Paul had to solve was concerned with the relative value of these ' gifts ' of the Spirit. Modern psychology has come to the help of theology in the interpretation of these phenomena, and, in so doing, has confirmed the apostle's standard of values. The ' gift ' most prized at Corinth, until St. Paul affirmed its inferiority, was that of glossolaly, or ' speaking with tongues.' It took the form of excited, enthusiastic utterance, of broken ejaculations of prayer or praise, the whole being so incoherent as to convey no intelligible meaning to an ordinary listener, save as the ' tongue ' was given an ' interpretation.' Obviously glossolaly represented a highly emotional condition, and, therefore, as is to be expected, has reappeared since New Testament times ; indeed, something akin to it has attended every great revival of religion. What about its appearance in Methodism ? The Evangelical Revival seems to have had some remarkable accompaniments. St. Paul places ' healings ' among the charismata, and, in conformity with this, Wesley, in spite of his belief in medical science, reports in his *Journal* instances of physical healing coming within his own observation which he could only explain as due to supernatural agency. ' Prophesying,' in the sense of glowing, intelligible utterance, was common enough in Methodist preaching. Wesley, too, had experience of pretended prophets, and in his *Journal* (November 3, 1742) he tells an amusing story of how he dealt with two of them. Strange physical and psychical phenomena also accompanied Wesley's preaching. People fell prostrate and writhed as if convulsed. Some passed into a trance-like condition, and claimed to have visions. In other cases congregations were moved to loud outcries of grief or thanksgiving. What Wesley records as happening at Bristol occurred elsewhere. He says :

' In the evening, almost as soon as I began to pray in the

society, a voice of lamentation and bitter mourning was heard from the whole congregation ; but in a while loud thanksgivings were mixed therewith, which in a short space spread over all, so that nothing was to be heard on every side but, " Praise to God and to the Lamb for ever and ever ! " '

Similar phenomena took place at Newcastle-on-Tyne, and have attended revival movements in the daughter Churches of Methodism. In so far as they were genuine experiences, they are instances of over-wrought emotion. As I have said elsewhere, ' Just as a sudden shock of fear may paralyse all movement, so when emotion, either by steady accumulation or by a sudden up-rushing, has reached a certain intensity, it may in some natures paralyse for a while the motor-centres of the brain, and induce all the phenomena which have been described.' But to explain them thus is not necessarily to dissociate them from the Holy Spirit. They may quite credibly be the product of the Spirit in His application of religious truth to the soul. After all, the Gospel, rightly understood, has a tremendously moving message. It offers a great salvation ; it kindles an amazing hope. Men, deep sunk in sin, to whom it comes as a wonderful message of deliverance, are, even if not ordinarily emotional, stirred by it to rapture, while, if naturally emotional, their joy may pass into ecstasy. Methodism in the course of its history has again and again numbered these types among its converts. Moreover, though it discourages extravagances of emotion, and has rightly attached supreme importance to the ethical, it has always held religion to be emotional in both its appeal and expression. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the hymns of Methodism. How many of them stir the soul as we sing them ! It would seem sometimes, when one contemplates ordinary Methodist worship to-day, that there has been a chilling of religious emotion as compared with even a generation ago. Expressions of feeling are less frequent and more subdued. Perhaps the explanation is that

emotion has become more restrained in its expression, this restraint being a usual concomitant of social and intellectual advance. If, however, it is religious feeling itself that has grown weak, Methodism must contemplate among the ends she seeks the recovery of that ' warmed heart ' in the experience of which she was born.

V

One criticism which Dr. Dale felt constrained to pass on the Evangelical Revival was that it laid insufficient emphasis on Christian ethics. It failed, to quote his exact words, ' to afford to those whom it has restored to God a lofty ideal of practical righteousness and a healthy vigorous moral training.' This criticism does not justly lie at the door of John Wesley. Quite a number of his published sermons deal with principles of Christian conduct. He denounced as unreal a faith, such as he found in certain Moravians, which did not express itself in works, and he was quick to purge the Methodist societies of any professed Christians whose life belied their profession. Nor does Dr. Dale's complaint justly attach to Methodism. One purpose for which Wesley felt that Methodism had been raised up was ' to spread Scriptural holiness,' and the ideal experience to which Methodists were exhorted to attain was that of entire sanctification or perfect love. Justification was to have its sequel in sanctification. ' By justification,' said Wesley, ' we are saved from the guilt of sin, and restored to the favour of God ; by sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God.' Not that sanctification, save in its ideal form, was necessarily separate from justification. Wesley at least did not think so. ' At the same time,' says he, ' that we are justified, yea, in that very moment, sanctification begins. . . . We are inwardly renewed by the power of God.' This has already been seen to be implied in his teaching concerning the new birth. Moreover, a salvation

which did nothing more than give us a new standing before God and left unchanged the sinful nature from which our acts of sin had proceeded, would be sadly incomplete. Happily the faith which unites us to Christ becomes, through the gift to us of His indwelling Spirit, the assurance of the attainment of holiness in heart and life. ' The title Holy, applied to the Spirit of God, does not only denote that He is holy in His own nature, but that He makes us so.' Numerous quotations might be given, all going to show that this phase of the Holy Spirit's ministry, while asserted again and again in the New Testament, was equally prominent in the Methodist witness. It was declared, not simply in sermon, but in song. Indeed, some of the most characteristic hymns of Methodism relate to ' those that seek and those that have full redemption.' Such hymns as ' O for a heart to praise my God,' with its prayer for

A heart in every thought renewed,
And full of love divine ;
Perfect, and right, and pure, and good,
A copy, Lord, of Thine !

or that beginning ' All things are possible to him,' in which Charles Wesley sings,

The most impossible of all
Is, that I e'er from sin should cease ;
Yet shall it be, I know it shall :
Jesus, look to Thy faithfulness !
If nothing is too hard for Thee,
All things are possible to me.

When Thou the work of faith hast wrought,
I here shall in Thine image shine,
Nor sin in deed, or word, or thought.
Let men exclaim and fiends repine,
They cannot break the firm decree ;
All things are possible to me,

are sufficient, though they might be abundantly paralleled, to indicate how clearly and exultantly Methodism

proclaimed the Christian privilege of sanctification by the Spirit.

The doctrine, of course, needed, and needs still, to be safeguarded in its presentation. John Wesley himself was chary of applying the epithet ' entire ' to sanctification as commonly experienced, as, also, of speaking of ' sinless ' perfection. Sanctification in that sense, he said, is something ' that we wait for.' He seems to have preferred to describe the state or experience as perfection, i.e., as he goes on to say, perfect love, this form of its description having the merit that it indicated the way in which the nature, regarded as inwardly renewed, was to express itself in disposition and act. It is true that Wesley occasionally uses language which would suggest that he thought of this experience as one which could be attained here and now. When commenting on ' Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ' (1 John iii. 6), he is very peremptory in denying to the Greek tense used there the notion of habit, and passes over the difference in statement, justified, however, by a difference of tense in the original, which occurs earlier in the same Epistle. Methodism, too, has kept an open mind as to whether sanctification, viewed as the release of the soul from the power of inbred sin, is an instantaneous or gradual work of the Spirit. ' Perhaps,' said Wesley, ' it may be gradually wrought in some ; I mean in this sense, they do not advert to the particular moment wherein sin ceases to be. But it is infinitely desirable, were it the will of God, that it should be done instantaneously.' Wesley himself inclined to the latter alternative, and refers in his *Journal* to persons who claimed to be ' saved from all sin.' He is a little hesitant, however, in endorsing the claim, ' perhaps,' he says, ' because I have an exceeding complex idea of sanctification or a sanctified man.' His sanity of judgement further appears in his warning that only by strict self-discipline and a constant use of the various means of grace could the sanctified experience, if enjoyed, be retained, and that it must always be so construed as to

require growth in it unto perfection. With that comment we may conclude our review of what, as regards emphasis, is a characteristic element in the Methodist doctrine of the Spirit.

VI

Little more remains to be said. Along the line of investigation which has been pursued, Methodist thought to-day is true, as regards the place and work of the Holy Spirit, to the substance of the beliefs of early Methodism. What change there has been is mainly in nature, not a substitute for the inherited faith, but a supplement to it. One such addition has already been noted. Others are concerned more especially with the range of the Holy Spirit's operation. On that matter there has been a widening of outlook. Earlier conceptions have not been denied but transcended. It is chiefly in the realm of truth that this change has occurred. Theology is determined in its expression by, amongst other things, the interests of those whose theology it is. That is true as I have shown elsewhere, even of the New Testament presentation of theology. The New Testament practically ignores any operation of the Spirit save that which is related to the truth brought by Christ. It declared, of course, that even that truth awaited further exposition by the Spirit, and for that reason Christian scholarship has received without fear any new light which discovery or a reverent criticism has thrown upon either the nature of Scripture or the contents of its divine message. But it has done this the more readily because it has come to recognize all truth, sacred or secular, as inspired by the Spirit of God.

But a more significant development has occurred even in the realm of religion. Methodism has taken a worthy part in the evangelization of non-Christian peoples. Its heralds have gone out into all lands, and under different skies and in many tongues are publishing to-day the glad tidings of the gospel. But that missionary enterprise has found a new motive. We seek to displace the existing

religious faiths of heathendom, not because those faiths are wholly false and the conduct which they inspire wholly destitute of good, but because in Christianity which we offer there is something vastly truer and better. And even peoples who have the good have a right to the best. The science of comparative religion has shed a flood of light upon the ethnic religions. The greatest of them have much that is worthy in both their ideas and precepts, and even the lowest afford evidence that the God and Father of all men has nowhere left Himself without witness, but that He who gave to one chosen and disciplined people the supreme revelation of His nature and will, meaning that revelation to be through them for all peoples, at the same time gave to other nations such measure of truth as their minds and hearts were able to receive. Hence we sing, with Whittier, of the Spirit's operation in the realm of religion :

> All souls that struggle and aspire,
> All hearts of prayer by Thee are lit ;
> And, dim or clear, Thy tongues of fire
> On dusky tribes and centuries sit.
>
> Nor bounds, nor clime, nor creed Thou know'st,
> Wide as our needs Thy favours fall ;
> The white wings of the Holy Ghost
> Stoop unseen o'er the heads of all.

And it is the same with the sphere of secular action. That too, in so far as it makes for individual happiness and well-being and for a right ordering of social and national life, has come to be regarded as belonging to the work of the Spirit. All forms of human progress, in addition to being willed by God, are inspired by Him. So once more we sing :

> Life of ages richly poured,
> Love of God, unspent and free,
> Flowing in the prophet's word,
> And the people's liberty !

Consecrating art and song,
Holy book and pilgrim way,
Quelling strife and tyrant wrong,
Widening freedom's sacred sway.

It is thus that our vision of the work of the Spirit has enlarged, and we have been led to see God fulfilling Himself in many ways.

VI

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

By Atkinson Lee, M.A.

By experience is meant, primarily, a process of conscious trial or experiment, and, secondarily, the fruit or result of this process. Such experience is popularly thought to be especially informative, even though expensive. There is a favourite antithesis between thought and experience, or life, which finds expression in much psychology of religion. Hence creeds, doctrines, and speculation are opposed to religious experience, and superiority is claimed for the latter, sometimes almost amounting to infallibility. It may even be said that just as the Romanists laid stress upon the infallibility of the Church, or Pope, and the Protestants upon that of the Bible, so modern religionists are tempted to ascribe certitude to personal experience. This tendency is in accord with the modern disposition to seek truth inductively rather than deductively, but it is not sufficiently remarked that such experience is only the beginning of wisdom, not the end. The artist claims that his art is experience, but adds that it must be perfectly expressed; the scientist rests upon raw experience, but subjects it to the severest tests of scientific method; the logician describes inference as an experiment with ideas, but strictly controls the experiment by first principles. Philosophy in general is nowadays affirmed to be the analysis of the contents and implications of our conscious experience.

Evidently what is meant to be emphasized, when the experiential nature of religion is stressed, is its immediacy,

directness, purity. This, by contrast with what is mediate and impure, is often held to guarantee the reality of the object. The distinction of mediate and immediate corresponds to that between 'acquaintance-with' and 'knowledge-about' and leads to the search for a pure religious (or other) experience. This, if it could be found, would no doubt be the basis of all religious construction, but nothing is clearer than the relativity of such purity or impurity. It is no more possible to find pure religious experience than it was to find its counterpart, the religious sense of a former generation. Yet that our mixed experience testifies to the presence of divine action upon or within us is the presupposition of the religious consciousness, however variously this belief may be interpreted. This divine presence is not simple in its quality or constant in its quantity; it varies from individual to individual and within each person's experience; it is modified by environment and by social culture as well as by personal endowment. None the less, it remains the basis of distinctively religious experience, and needs no more justification to the religious man than beauty does to the artist, or space-time to the physical scientist. In this respect it may claim to be an '*a priori*' of theological construction.

It need not be maintained, however, that the characteristics of this immediate divine presence are easy to discriminate and define. Whilst the factors of the religious experience are subject and object, just as with any other form of experience, yet the differentiating marks of the religious situation are vivid rather than clear, rich rather than obvious.[1] Religious evidence is dim, fruitful, concrete, not precise, abstract, easily formulated, and one should not apply to it tests which are inappropriate in kind. There is a mean kind of clearness which goes with shallowness, and a vivid dimness which is the sign of depth. Yet it is affirmed by the normal religious consciousness that its object, deity, is pervasive of all its

[1] Cf. Baron von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses*, p. 105.

experience, and therefore discoverable by practically all men. Exceptions are regarded as comparable to cases of colour-blindness. Further, religion asserts the importance of its data, which come with a certain urgency and insistence as belonging to ultimate reality. When disentangled from other facts, religious data have a degree of authority and finality which is not found elsewhere. Again, it becomes increasingly plain that the experiences of religion are autonomous ; they involve either a different set of facts from those of the rest of human culture or a different attitude towards the same facts.[1]

Before probing this last question, it is desirable to consider how the religious mind grasps its object. It is generally allowed that there is no specific religious organ : the religious sense or faculty has gone the way of all the other faculties, and the religious instinct fares no better to-day. It is agreed that religion is a total reaction involving the whole of human nature. It involves cognition, feeling, and practice, and tends to integrate the whole personality. It is probably true, however, that the characteristic reaction to the divine object is predominantly affective, and in its earliest stages consists of emotion. Though no mere blind feeling, religion is decidedly affective experience, and retains this nature to the end in the form of an organized sentiment. That the basis of religion is an ' affect ' by no means precludes it from having noetic importance. Affective experience no doubt primarily expresses conditions of the experient, and so far is merely private and ' subjective.' But it is the affirmation of many such experients that certain emotions yield new contacts with reality, and, furthermore, that other experients may share their discovery by adopting a suitable attitude. The poet who feels a presence that inspires him with the joy of elevated thoughts, or the mystic who professes to receive revelation in ecstasy, is but exhibiting in an extreme form the fact that ' in a general way the quality of our emotional

[1] Cf. Baron von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses*, pp. 22–3.

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reaction to an object does signify the nature of the object.'[1] Affectional facts, described by such terms as horrible, awful, sublime, wonderful, impressive, and the like, seem then to have a cognitive function. Emotional qualities disclose the nature of the object in the same way as do sensory qualities, though no doubt with more inconstancy, because of the 'personal equation.'[2] But the probability is that they bespeak a right orientation to reality, when compared, criticized, and generalized. For this reason we may expect to find a distinctively religious emotion or 'affect.' This has been described, in Schleiermacher's famous definition, as a feeling of absolute dependence. This account is doubtless both too simple and too purely subjective, since it leaves its object uncharacterized, though it is admitted by Windelband to be the foundational fact of our religious life.[3] Alexander's account is more explicit when it asserts that the distinctive constituent of the religious sentiment is the feeling of our going out towards something not ourselves and greater and higher than ourselves, with which we are in communion.[4] The 'something,' however, remains uncharacterized, and 'we must still raise our altars to the unknown God.'[5] Dependence upon and going out towards something are doubtless two essential and correlative attitudes of the religious life, but the object of these attitudes is in either of the foregoing cases nothing less than the universe; so that we may sum up our findings so far by saying that the minimum description of the religious experience is given in the phrase 'cosmic emotion.'

This emotion is not directed, however, towards the universe in all its aspects, but only as considered sacred. Sacredness is the differentiating mark of the religious object, which otherwise need not belong to any special sphere of experience. It is customary to regard as sacred certain beings such as totems, spirits, or planets, and again

[1] McDougall, *Outline of Psychology*, p. 315. [2] *Ib.*, p. 216.
[3] *Intro. to Philosophy*, p. 330. [4] *Space, Time and Deity*, Vol. II, p. 373.
[5] *Ib.*, p. 347.

certain values such as truth, beauty, and virtue, but they are not so as bare beings or values; sacredness attaches to them because of their possession of some important properties. These properties have been summed up by Otto under the title of the Numinous, which embraces such characters as awefulness, overpoweringness, energy or urgency, mystery and fascination. When fully expounded these characters doubtless express a large part of the nature of the sacred, though probably the inferior part. For it is noticeable that with the development of religion there is a transformation in men's estimate of what is sacred; that which began as merely prohibited (taboo) may end in being venerated for its own sake, or, again, despised as unholy. It is largely true, also, that the sacred is the social, for the sacred tends to unify its devotees, and, reversely, society puts its sanction upon sacred usages. Further, the sacred is increasingly regarded as animate, till at its highest reaches the sacred becomes the spiritual, manifesting the highest values or ideals that we know.

If to the natural qualities of the numinous be added the social and spiritual ones just named, we have a partial explication of the religious object. It is noteworthy that sacredness does not attach to mere quantity. Mere infinitude—say of time or space—is not religiously affecting: its effect is akin to, if not identical with, that of chaos, namely despair. It is difficult, therefore, to believe in a God who is ultimately space-time, for there is no reason to regard it as sacred. The same must be said about the Unknowable. But there are few other things which have not some time been treated as sacred, or which are intrinsically incapable of it. The sacred is able to flood the sphere of the non-sacred or secular, so that the whole of reality, including evil itself, is able to be regarded religiously. To be a whole or join a whole is said to constitute religion[1]: the whole, however, must be worthy of our homage. We may regard ourselves, with Plato, as

[1] Bosanquet, in *What Religion Is*.

the spectators of all time and all existence, or, with Spinoza, as loving God without hope of return, but we cannot in religion treat the sacred object despitefully, or as a mere means. Otherwise religion becomes magic, or, at best, applied science. 'The idea of the sacred . . . is the mother-idea of religion. Myths and dogmas analyse in their own fashion its contents, rites, utilize its properties, religious morality flows from it, priests incorporate it, sanctuaries, sacred places, religious monuments fix and root it in the soil. Religion is the administration of the sacred.'[1]

The sacredness of the object calls out on the part of the subject the response of worship. Primarily, indeed, the sacred is defined by the worshipful attitude adopted towards it, rather than worship by the sacredness of its object. 'What we worship, that is God.'[2] Worship, however, must be comprehensively understood. It is here regarded as broadly equivalent to adoration (the term preferred by Baron von Hügel), or to piety (favoured by Alexander). It covers, therefore, both public and private response to the sacred. Etymologically it implies the possession of *worth* by its object, and provokes a response of valuation. This character religion preserves constantly: it is a valuation of worth. This valuation is no mere intellectual estimation, but predominantly an affective response. This consists principally of the emotions, wonder, admiration, and awe.[3] Wonder is a great source of religion, which gives rise to a great deal of explanatory mythology and theology, springing from the instinct of curiosity. It is said to be a primary emotion, which is provoked by the moderately strange, leading to alternative attitudes of approach towards and retreat from its object. It is also held to be one of the principal roots both of science and religion, though its diversion in modern times from religion to science is regarded as

[1] Hubert, *Manuel d'Histoire des Religions*, p. xlvii.
[2] Alexander: op. cit. vol. ii., p. 431.
[3] Cf. McDougall, *Social Psychology*, p. 302.

ominous for civilization.[1] Possibly the recent discoveries of the limits of our knowledge both in theory and in practice may lead to a renewal of the sense of mystery, which is essential to religion. The mysterious, at once impelling to advance and retreat, leads to the formulation of doctrine or dogma, often regarded as secret and esoteric and commonly reserved for a special profession. The other emotion, admiration, is considered to be compounded of wonder and submission, being excited by the perception that we are in the presence of something greater than ourselves. It is a social emotion, being provoked only by that which is animate and creative. It is the æsthetic emotion above all, and leads to the personification of nature, with the assumption of one or more creative powers. The outcome of admiration is joy, to which religion at its highest tends, and its expression is praise. Hence the large, and possibly most influential, part of religion which is uttered in song or other arts. For 'all art is praise,' and religion and the arts largely overlap. In the form of praise, then, religion seeks joyful and generally seemly intercourse with deity as that which fascinates.

Again, the emotion of awe is said to be compounded of admiration and fear, resulting in a mixture of attraction and repulsion. It is provoked by the sublime, and ranges from slight apprehension to almost pure fear. Fear undoubtedly plays a great part in religion, even up to modern times, and the complete loss of it would be a doubtful boon. It apparently predominated in primitive religion, and even in that of Greece and Rome.[2] Gradually, as the tenderer emotion of gratitude mingles with awe, this becomes softened into reverence, which is described as the religious emotion *par excellence*.[3] It forbids jocularity in the worshipper, being serious though social. Its expression religiously is in the form of prayer, which, therefore, may take all forms and degrees, from

[1] Cf. McDougall, *Social Psychology*, p. 319.
[2] *Ib.*, pp. 310 ca. [3] *Ib.*, p. 132.

petitions which are almost demands to friendly but respectful converse. Awe and reverence thus correspond to the *tremendous* or daunting in the object of worship, from which the element of sublimity is never absent.

Wonder, admiration, and awe thus exhibit themselves in the chief religious functions of theological construction, praise and prayer. Since, however, our primary emotions may be organized in many different ways, they tend to form systems, which then are called sentiments. These draw into themselves many minor tendencies of human nature, whilst being dominated by some chief objective. Religion fashions such a sentiment about the sacred object, a sentiment which in its higher reaches becomes increasingly the typical one of love. Communion with God and sympathy towards man are integrated into a complex sentiment which may be described as reverent love. Worship issues in being ' lost in wonder, love, and praise.'

So far, however, religion has been treated as springing up from the immediate data contained in the ' emotional qualities ' of objects. There are some forms of religion, notably the mystical, which would prefer to remain at this level. But it is evident that validity does not belong merely to immediate experience, nor, again, to the merely personal and private. Otherwise corporate religion would be impossible, and indeed absurd. The fact of social experience, with its interpretation of testimony, shows that history must play its part in religious life ; social communication (as in the Methodist class-meeting) differs in no essential way from historical transmission of religious experience. If books are the ' life-blood of a precious spirit treasured up to an age beyond age,' it is plain that immediate experience must be supplemented by mediate, and that the communion of saints depends largely upon faithful historical representation. This requires vivid and exact reconstructive imagination. It is usually found that the mystics interpret and express their experiences in traditional imagery,

without which the content of their religious life would be far slighter than it is. Even the mystics have a tradition of their own, which often takes the form of cult. The social and historical factor, therefore, in the formation of a fund of religious experience, can hardly be over-estimated, easily as it lends itself to controversy, and even misrepresentation. The strength of the instituted Churches lies here.

Further development of the religious life takes place when constructive imagination and speculation play upon the more directly given data. Religious thought is apt to be pictorial, and commonly fears to leave the warmth and colour of emotional language. In the form of Golden Ages, either behind or ahead or timeless, it tries to fashion an ideal world, or at least a world of release from present ill. This idealizing tendency seems to be native to religion, and accounts for the Utopias which it so widely produces. Whilst ancient thought mostly threw the ideal world into the past, the more modern has projected it into the future, though a powerful trend has been in the direction of regarding it as constant above time and space. Religious thought has often hesitated between considering heaven to be a condition or a location; the recent attempts to combine both views turn upon a solution of the relations between time and eternity. The apocalyptic language of much religion masks these difficulties, it being given in poetic form and being modified in emphasis during the ages. But the difficulties persist, and point to the need of an extension of religious experience into the realm of criticism and speculation, whence arises theological construction. Doctrines and dogmas are thus religious experience mediated by thought and formulated in careful language. They have the same kind of validity as any other scientific summaries.

The tests of the validity of religious experience, however, are not those which pertain to the more exact sciences. They are akin rather to those of philosophy. Of these, the consensus of human opinion is a familiar one, and,

though evolutionary theory has weakened the obvious force of that argument by showing the relativity of opinions, the lines of convergence are remarkable. The comparative study of religion has strengthened the authority of religion in general, if it has lessened the claims of particular faiths. A further test of validity is found in fruitfulness—perhaps a special characteristic of religion.[1] This pragmatic test requires, of course, a standard of values, but many products of religion—like those approved in the Sermon on the Mount—are so self-evidently fine that they are used even by the unbeliever as a touchstone of real faith. The modern world, with its belief in progress, is apt to see the criterion of a religion's validity in its contribution to the advancement of civilization; this is an important test, but the chief practical measure of a religion is the wealth of saintliness it produces. Saints have a family likeness everywhere, and are the plainest justification of a religion. Here, however, we come upon another religious warranty of truth, for true religion tends to unify the personality within itself, and also in relation to the whole of reality. Religion aspires to harmony, and, though often provocative of great conflicts and terrible evils by the way, issues in serenity of temper and largeness of view. This comprehensiveness and coherence of religion at its higher stages is a sure mark of its sound philosophy.

Religion makes one final affirmation. It claims to refer to ultimate reality. In the first place, this is a denial of its mere subjectivity. Recent theories which assert this, like Freud's, are subject to the fatal criticism that they are equally subjective—and therefore, by the argument, equally illusory—with the beliefs they criticize. This reduces all belief to mere opinion, and is pure scepticism. Religion repudiates scepticism and affirms the reality of its object, God, unconditionally. In this attitude it is in agreement with recent realism, which insists upon the independent reality and direct knowability of its objects.

[1] Hocking, *Meaning of God*, p. 13.

In religious language, God is transcendent of the worshipper. No mere projection of the imagination, He is the supreme reality. This carries us farther than a religion of humanity, whose object, even when idealized,[1] is so pitifully inadequate to fill the rôle required. The recent world-war has destroyed that idol. The superman of the future has perhaps more claim to be treated with homage, but, apart from his merely hypothetical existence, he can scarcely lay claim to be ultimate. A growing god or veiled being or emergent deity is commonly so vaguely sketched that religion is left in a predominantly agnostic attitude, and in great uncertainty whether the being offered to religion is worthy of its worship, whether it can be treated as sacred, or whether it can be said to be real at all, much less ultimate.

For such reasons as these there is a recent general tendency to find deity in the grand values, truth, beauty, and righteousness. These are held to express what is deepest and most permanent in reality, and, indeed, to be the disclosure of God. They are thus conceived as aspects of being: as no mere ideals, but as substantiate. They are found in experience, nothing more so, and that immediately and pervasively. They are real and transsubjective, and claim an authority which is superhuman. In that sense they are transcendent, not just immanent human tendencies or ideals, but the very voice of God. They are worthy of man's reverence and of becoming the object of his devoted pursuit; and hence it is possible to find a convergence of the higher minds of different religious faiths upon them as upon the essence of deity. That they are all manifestations of ultimate reality may be said to be established by the labours of such thinkers as Cousin, Windelband and Dean Inge, though priority may be claimed for one of them, as by Kant, who finds God in the moral law, or by the scientist, whose chief business it is to think God's thoughts after Him, or by Browning,

[1] Cf. Leuba, *A Psychological Study of Religion*, ch. xiii.

who sings of the supremacy of beauty. They perhaps form an interdependent triad of divine expression. The theological name for these manifestations of deity is revelation, a word which is indispensable for religion.

'All religion is revealed religion,' said Hegel. It is true that revelation is a fundamental category or assumption of religion, but it is awakened and confirmed by empirical findings. The experience of *data*, of givenness, in the religious sphere, is taken in the sense of communication from God, as divine self-disclosure. Its theological description is found in such terms as prevenience and grace, which express the fact that we cannot anticipate divine activity, but, rather, that it forestalls and incites ours. This divine prompting is but the highest form of the self-manifestation of all real objects, and can be questioned in principle only by those who, like Croce, make all reality to be but self-expression, and therefore leave no room for religion. The experience of reception of divine influences is, however, verifiable, and it is only a question at what point we shall term them distinctively 'revelations.' Religion has often reserved the word for some striking or exceptional self-manifestation of God, and particular religions have claimed an exclusive revelation for themselves. With one accord, however, they attest the experience of an Other than the experient, which Other offers itself for discovery and calls for response from him. Sometimes the discovery is so surprising that it seems to transcend any familiar powers of nature or man, and is ascribed therefore to the 'Wholly Other' (in Otto's words). Otherwise expressed, it is miraculous.

'Wholly Other,' in the sense of unrelated to our experience, divine activity cannot be. Else it would be unknowable. And religion claims that miracles are experienced and known as modes of divine intervention. That they cannot be reduced to ordinary repetitive laws of causation is, of course, true, for it is their nature to be exceptional and incalculable. But the occurrence of the relatively unique is a fact of experience, and religion

adduces cases of such uniqueness amongst its own phenomena. So long as science regarded its laws as asserting strict continuity and repetition, it was possible to oppose science to religion, since most, if not all, religions affirm breaches of such law. With the rise of belief in discontinuity and indeterminacy in recent science,[1] the antithesis is no longer valid. Discontinuity and uniqueness are as truly facts of experience as is repetitive uniformity, and, in the form of unpredictable 'emergents,' are accepted in recent philosophy.[2] Thus the familiar opposition of experience to miracles by Hume is not tenable. The only question remaining is as to the reliability of the evidence for alleged miracles. The various religions have their own evidences to offer, which, whenever they are critically examined and put together, may confirm each other, and be regarded as racial experience of exceptional divine activity. Thus considered, they may be taken as part of the divine education of the race —an education which proceeds through well-marked stages of religious history.

It is impossible here to trace the history and analyse the contents of this religious education. It must suffice to investigate that part of it which is most near and familiar to us—namely Christianity. The Christian world finds its sacred object in Jesus Christ as the supreme revelation of God and the unique embodiment of values. He is, therefore, the object of worship amongst Christians generally. Whilst in the earliest days of our era the immediate object of divine homage, He became after His death mediately known by testimony, except so far as believed to be present in sacrament, or mystic union, or transformed life. The earliest disciples no doubt experienced His presence in all these ways, but succeeding Christians have tended to emphasize one mode or the other. The Roman Church has stressed the idea of historical continuity, has appealed to authority and

[1] Cf. Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World*, ch. xiv.
[2] Cf. Alexander, op. cit., vol. ii., p. 45.

tradition, and evoked the sense of loyalty to a polity. The Greek Church has regarded itself as the depositary and guardian of revealed truth or orthodoxy, though it has allowed and encouraged the aspiration to mystic insight and communion with God. The Protestant Churches have fostered, rather, the experimental side of religion as discovered in the redemptive experience of conversion. In some cases experience has become mainly a matter of private conviction by some Inner Light, though in general the genius of Christianity is to be strongly social. But the tendencies towards an integral Christianity, with various complementary modes of experience, are increasing steadily.

Such integrated Christianity would presumably find its central experiences in the specifically Christian triad of virtues, faith, hope, and love. These are Christianity in a nutshell, according to Dean Inge.[1] They focus upon Christ as the object of worship, but express different attitudes of mind. Faith means, primarily, trust, and it is best to preserve that meaning in spite of various interpretations of the term. It is contrasted with knowledge as assumption is contrasted with acceptance of fact. It involves knowledge, but it goes beyond knowledge. It is not blind, yet it outruns evidence. It makes postulates where pure reason would suspend judgement, yet it may be shown that postulation is necessary to the exercise of reason about the empirical world. Faith contains both a factual and an ideal element, and it is trust in the ideal element that constitutes the venture of faith. Christianity, like the other great religions, being convinced of man's evil estate and need of deliverance, asserts the necessity of faith in God as the great step in such deliverance. Such faith is experimental, it goes beyond sight, yet it is confirmed by trial. The experience of many centuries may be adduced to show that such faith is justified by its results, even though its object is not visibly present. The saying of the Founder of

[1] *Faith and its Psychology*, p. 41.

Christianity is repeatedly confirmed: 'Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed.'

Faith repeatedly verified produces hope. Hope is called a prospective emotion, being sustained by foresight of a goal believed to be attainable. It springs from desire, and again reinforces desire; it sustains our energies and keeps us constant in our course. In consequence of the uncertainty of attainment, it is accompanied by uneasiness, and, by making the future appear better than the present, is often deceptive, but it is indispensable to achievement. 'No other emotion has had such general tributes paid to it,'[1] and it is 'of such unique importance that, whatever our circumstances, we must sustain it, in one form or another, with all the courage we possess.'[2] Hope is maintained in the Christian scheme by a vision of the Kingdom of God. This, which was the dominating idea in the mind of Christ, has been variously conceived as an organized Church, a spiritual community of saints, or a body of favoured elect. Its ground principles, however, seem to be given in the Sermon on the Mount, illustrated in poetical form in many parables, and embodied in the life of the Twelve. They have resulted in attempts to realize an ideal community, whose fascination has provoked the efforts of all manner of men for nearly two thousand years. Hope has been the mainspring of progress in the West, as resignation has been a chief cause of conservatism in the East, and for such hope we have mainly to thank the inspiriting religion which took the place of the Graeco-Roman civilization, upon which 'despair and secret loathing fell.'

Hope, springing from and strengthening desire, fosters love. Love, though partly resting upon an innate disposition, is largely acquired by following with hope or despondency the fortunes of an object of desire which becomes the centre of many interests. About that objective cluster many primary emotions—like fear, anger, joy, and sorrow—these being gradually organized

[1] Shand, *Foundations of Character*, p. 480. [2] *Ib.*, p. 508.

into a system of desire. When to this system are added such contemplative emotions as wonder, admiration, and awe, the system of desire passes into that of love. In desire we are not at rest, but are striving forward; in love we find repose and contemplative satisfaction.[1] Love is one of the higher systems of character, which tend in their growth with increasing success to control the emotions and impulses upon which they rest, but which in their decline again release these same forces.[2] Love is thus a sentiment, and indeed the typical sentiment, tending to unify the personality by harmonizing our strivings, at the same time that it enjoys and cherishes its object. Its nature is greatly coloured by its aim, whether that be family or friend or country, but it inclines in its later and more reflective developments to widen out into disinterested humanity and benevolence.[3] These findings of modern psychology confirm the importance of the sentiment of love which Christianity has always made supreme in its schemes of theology or social living.

In the Christian scheme the hoped-for object of desire, which organizes the elemental passions into the sentiment of love, is the Kingdom of God. That Kingdom is comprehensively described indeed in the dictum that it consists in love to God and love to one's neighbours. But it embraces in its scope the animate and the natural world, for it regards the whole cosmos as the manifestation of Creative Love. Love calls forth love, and nothing is plainer than, that whilst Christ felt and evoked the simpler passions, He contemplated the universe with free and friendly eyes as the Kingdom of His Father, whom all should adore with wondering and admiring reverence. This loving sentiment was the attitude which He bequeathed to His disciples, and which has been, with whatever shortcomings, the distinctive mark of their character. The fostering of love has been, in theory at least if not in fact, the prime object of the Christian Church; yet love regarded not as a mere passion, but

[1] Shand, op. cit., pp. 564–5. [2] *Ib.*, p. 62. [3] *Ib.*, pp. 266–7.

as a wide-embracing and dominating system which moulds the whole personality. This type of experience tends to be markedly social in character, for love of men becomes by sympathy diffused through groups till it becomes love of man. And it also prompts to aesthetic expression, for the love of God and His creation disposes men to praise, which is the great meeting-point of art and religion. It is not by chance that the religion of love has coincided in its history with one of the greatest art periods of the world.

It was this experience of Christian love that Methodism recovered for Britain in the eighteenth century, given over as this was to a dry and formal deism in theology and to exceptional libertinism and brutality in practice. Though professing not to depart from Anglican tenets, Methodism breathed a new spirit into them, a spirit akin to the Romantic movement which was then about to transform European life. This impulse Methodism largely retains. It consists, above all, in the affirmation of God's love to man, freely and universally offered through Jesus Christ, and in the call for the responsive love of man towards God. It assumes man's evil condition, and insists upon the need of radical conversion. Some writers have, indeed, found in this experience the distinctive mark of Methodism, and with some justification. For the methodizing of the process into formal stages was a new thing in religious history, and it has been the main source of the classic description of conversion in James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*. Repentance and forgiveness of sins produce the experience of the 'twice-born' that they are 'right with God,' or justified, often instantaneously. This conviction of salvation gives the Methodist doctrine of assurance, in which again some judges see the special contribution of Methodism to religious experience. Certain it is that frequently the converted attain a state of security and peace which lifts them above ordinary temptations, and takes them so far 'beyond good and evil' that they reach the stage of

sainthood commonly described as holiness. Such ripeness of religious character is described by the Wesleys as Christian perfection.

This ' scheme of salvation '—containing the five truths that all men need salvation, that all men might be saved, and might know themselves saved, that all should declare their salvation, and that all might perfect their holiness [1]—has a broad resemblance to the mystic way with its five stages of Awakening, Purgation, Illumination, Dark Night of the Soul, and Union. But Methodism has not encouraged the ecstasies of mysticism, nor the excesses to which its other stages are liable. It has remained a mild form of mysticism, insisting upon the immediacy of divine presence, assurance of salvation and perfect holiness, but it has supplemented these with stress upon social living and good works. It is thus a characteristically English mixture of beliefs, chiefly modelled upon the personal experience of John Wesley himself, and primarily intended for adults. Its emotionalism has been conspicuous throughout most of its history, and has found expression in abundant song. Not specially given to theology or art, Methodism has borrowed largely from other types of experience like the Lutheran and the Anglican, but it has fused these together in its own social passion so as to become in effect a new religious order, having for its basis a mystic communion with Christ, and for its aim nothing less than perfect love of God and mankind. It is now developing its educational side and including scholarship and art in its traditional evangelistic experience, and is thus becoming richer in its contents and more akin to the other Churches.

It is plain that to-day in the West (and even in the East) the grand divisions are not between different types of religious experience, as represented, say, by the several Churches, but between any religion at all and secularism. The denial of any ultimate object of worship, of revelation and the supernatural, and therefore of the old faiths, is

[1] Cf. *New History of Methodism*, vol. i., p. 306.

more obvious and articulate than ever before. But it may be pointed out, as by Troeltsch,[1] that the modern age has widely adopted many forms of idealism which do duty for organized religion. These forms abound, whether as philosophies or cults of art or social policies, and sometimes take shape as mixtures of old religions or attempts to produce new ones. Recent realism itself, connected as it is with certain revolutionary movements, is a passionate demand for sincerity, without which religion is impossible. And it may be assumed that from this welter of beliefs and protests will in time arise a richer and sounder synthesis of religious experience than has hitherto been attained. It need not be assumed, however, that the old faiths have lost their vitality. There is no need of a new religion and no sign of a new founder of one. Neither is there likelihood of the disappearance of religion. What is needed is mutual appreciation by religious men, a search for common foundations, and a presumption even in the presence of ostensible secularism that 'he that is not against us is for us.' Above all, what the present age in its wistfulness requires of religious men is just leadership in realizing and carrying out their own professed ideals.

[1] *Soziallehren*, pp. 848–940.

VII

THE CHURCH

By A. W. Harrison, M.C., B.Sc., D.D.

The word *Ecclesia* is only found on the lips of our Lord twice in the Gospels.[1] The second use of this term that we translate 'church' must refer to the local Jewish congregation or community. It is only in the famous promise to Peter at Caesarea Philippi, therefore, that the Gospels speak of a distinctive Christian Church, and for that reason the passage has been suspected as representing the ideas of early Christians rather than those of Christ Himself. It is true that the Pauline literature is the real home of the term *ecclesia*. Eighty-six out of the hundred and ten cases in which the word occurs are to be found in the Pauline Epistles or in the Acts of the Apostles. The term, however, was not coined by St. Paul. It had both a Greek and a Jewish ancestry. The democratic Greek city States were small enough to gather all their men into one Assembly, or House of Commons; they called this the Ecclesia. It was summoned by the herald, who blew his horn through the streets of the city. The Jewish Ecclesia was the congregation or assembly of the children of Israel, and in the Greek Old Testament there is no actual distinction made between συναγωγή and ἐκκλησία. It may therefore be that in our Lord's day the true Congregation of God for the Jew was to be found in the whole assembly of Israel considered ideally as a theocratic State or of that local representation of it which was found in the town or village synagogue. To the Jew the whole family

[1] Matt. xvi. 18, and xviii. 17.

of Israel was the Church summoned in ideal days by silver trumpets to meet at the door of the Tabernacle; summoned in our Lord's day by the great feasts to gather at the Temple from all parts of the Roman Empire; represented also in any local congregation where the confession of faith was made and the law and the prophets were read.[1] There is no reason, therefore, why our Lord should not have spoken of a new Ecclesia that He was to establish, preserving ideals at once Greek and Jewish, but having a confession and a fellowship that was peculiar to itself.

There is a sense in which the Christian Church existed before Caesarea Philippi; all its potentialities existed when Jesus chose twelve disciples that they might be with Him. All such discipleship is a preparation for the Ecclesia. As discipleship passed into faith and devotion so the Church of Christ came into existence. Peter was not the first bishop or official of the Church; he was the first to whom the Spirit of God gave the words of the great confession which drew from the lips of Jesus the gladdest cry of the Gospels: 'Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee but My Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee that thou art *Petros*, and on this *petra* I will build My Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.' So this unreliable disciple became the foundation stone of the Church; his fluid temperament set like concrete into an undying love for his Lord. The whole building of the Church from that day to the present is after that original pattern. It is a spiritual fellowship that our Lord is building, a fellowship first with Himself and then with one another in Himself; and any definition of the Church that does not begin with this conception is not after the pattern of Caesarea Philippi. In this same Peter, from the day of Pentecost, the fellowship spread outwards from Jerusalem, finding in Saul of Tarsus its first great missionary and theologian. We must not

[1] Cf. Schürer, *Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, Eng. trans., 2nd Ed. II. ii., pp. 59 ff.

call St. Paul the second founder of the Church. Led by the same Spirit that lighted up the soul of Peter with a flash of illumination at Caesarea Philippi, and amazed the little company in the Upper Room, Paul broke down the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, and made both one in Christ. He added to the Greek and Hebrew conceptions that were latent in the Ecclesia, some not unconnected with his Roman citizenship. It is not for nothing that we read that the title over the cross was 'in Hebrew and in Latin and in Greek.' The three races of the ancient world had each their contribution to make to the Church. Paul saw the little congregations of Christians growing up sporadically, but with the eye of a statesman he seized the strategic positions in a bee-line across the Empire: Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Rome. 'I must also see Rome' is his ardent desire. And once there, at the centre of human affairs, he sees the Church growing into an astonishing unity in Christ.

Paul did not found the Church. He was not crucified for us; but he laboured to make up what was lacking in the suffering of Christ that the Body of Christ might develop. He was not only a labourer, but an interpreter. The wonder and glory of the Church grew in his imagination with the passing of years, and in his prison epistles he reached the climax of his conception of that holy fellowship. It is the letter to the Ephesians that gave —not to the first recipients of it only, but to all future generations—St. Paul's doctrine of the beauty and wealth of the Church. To these Gentiles he said, 'Ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.' So the Church is the city of God and God's household—that is, the Father's family circle. 'Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom every building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord'; so the Church is God's temple. 'In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the

Spirit' (Eph. ii. 19–22). So the Church is God's dwelling-place. The city of God, the temple of God, the household of God, the habitation of God; these are the symbols by which St. Paul tries to set forth his vision of the Church. A city is a symbol of diversity, gathering into its fellowship all sorts and conditions of men, women, and children. A temple is a place of worship, where, in song and prayer and meditation, men forget their differences and find unity in the common, elemental thirst of the soul for God. The household is the place of family affection, where all stiff restraints and formalities are laid aside, and the new unity that comes from family likeness and family love is discovered. The habitation is the usual abode of the householder, and God Himself is the householder of the Church.

This may indeed be Paul's dream of the Church in prison, but our problem is to relate that ideal to the actual earthly institution. Paul indeed knew the limitations of his Churches; they were as grave as those of the seven Churches of Asia at a later date, yet even the weakest of them reflected something of that glory, though it might be seen as in a mirror of burnished bronze darkly. The earthly institutions had, however, certain great and abiding qualities. They formed fellowships of a peculiarly intimate kind; they were developing common acts of worship and were united by two strange sacraments that took them back to the words and deeds of Jesus; they were building up an organization in which the ministry of the Word and the sacraments was beginning to play its important part. Like every human institution, it was imperfect and limited, but the ideal of the Church was not merely transcendent and impossible, it was already in some degree immanent in the actual institution, and the hope prevailed that all imperfections should one day be conquered by the all-powerful Spirit of God.

This is no place to tell again the story of the conquest of the Empire by the Church, nor to discuss the mediaeval theory of the Church that arose on the ruins of the Empire.

Cyprian, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Hildebrand, play their important parts in shaping the ideals of that Church which claims to be holy, indivisible, and catholic, summing up into itself all the best aspirations of man in his spiritual nature as the Holy Roman Empire embodied the political ideal of a united Christendom. Christendom, indeed, and the Church were one. The baptized community of believers, under the headship of the Bishop of Rome, united in a common obedience and enjoying a common faith, believed '*semper, ubique, et ab omnibus,*' was the Church of which Jesus dreamed at Caesarea Philippi. Who would deny the grandeur of the conception or attempt to belittle its achievements in the history of civilization? Even the unity of Christendom failed at the division of the East and West, and we Westerners have given too little of our attention to the Greek Orthodox Church. Moreover, the imposing appearance of Roman unity was saved by the charters of freedom given to great Orders in which the spirit of individualism found expression. The rise of nationalism and the reforming spirit that tried to purify the Church by councils led up to the Reformation, when the very appearance of unity disappeared. Then arose the necessity for examining anew the doctrine of the Church, by going back to endeavour to discover the original ideal, and, if possible, to remould the shattered unity after that pattern.

It was at the Reformation that men began to differentiate between the visible and the invisible Church. The teaching of Rome was clear-cut and definite. Those in communion with Rome formed the 'body of Christ' and those alone. It seems a theory that disregards the mystical union of Christ and the individual member of His church. Beyond the pale of the visible institution there seems no room for fellowship in the life of Christ. The Reformers held that the visible Church was the organ of the invisible Church and created by it, but the two were not identical. For Luther, the Church was the

totality of believers; for Calvin the number of the elect known to God alone. All the Reformers were one in the endeavour to administer the discipline of the Church on earth that its membership should correspond, as nearly as human weakness would allow, to the pattern in the Holy Mount. 'They err not a little,' says Calvin, in the famous preface to the first edition of his *Institutes* (1536), 'from the truth when they acknowledge no Church but that which they see with the present eye, and when they affirm that the form of the Church is always to be seen. . . . We, on the contrary side, affirm both that the Church may consist of no visible form, and that the form itself is not contained in that outward splendour which they foolishly admire, but hath a far other indication, namely, the pure teaching of the word of God and the right ministration of the sacraments.' The last phrase in this statement is echoed in the nineteenth Article of Religion of the Church of England where the visible Church of Christ is defined as 'a congregation of faithful men in the which the pure word of God is preached and the sacraments be duly ministered.' This may serve to remind us of the fact that Calvin as well as Luther influenced the English Reformation, and that the two main streams of Continental Protestantism watered the fair soil from which Anglicanism sprang. The political situation in Geneva and the logical thoroughness of Calvin gave to the Reformed Churches in Switzerland and Holland and Scotland a higher doctrine of ecclesiastical independence of the State than Lutheranism was ever able to achieve. It was, however, no part of Luther's ideal that the State should control the Church. The political situation was too strong for him, and in many of the branches of Protestantism the so-called 'godly State' ruled the Church. The attempt was still made to teach that State and Church were merely the secular and spiritual aspects of a single entity which was no longer the whole of Christendom but the nation. Herein Anglicanism and Lutheranism find themselves near akin,

though the former borrowed its definition of the Church from Calvin, whose followers denied with such intensity the overlordship of the State in ecclesiastical affairs and held a doctrine of the spiritual independence of the Church as proud and high as had ever been taught at Rome.

Into this field of Anglicanism, now unquestionably divided by the existence of Dissent, was John Wesley born. Though he himself remained a loyal member of the Church of England through life, it is significant that both his grandfathers were Nonconformists. Puritanism and Arminian ecclesiasticism, the two main streams of English seventeenth-century religion, met in him. He had a very great reverence for tradition, and a deep sense of the importance of ecclesiastical continuity. His real life work grew out of the firm conviction that he was appointed by God to a world parish. This created the problem of the relation of his societies to the Church, and the determining factor in its solution was the practical need of the moment. One must at all costs obey God rather than man. The Methodist societies were the creation of the divine Spirit and the narrowness of human theory could not be permitted to jeopardize that divine creation. The struggle between the two principles of the authority of the institution and the authority of inner illumination was with him to the end. That strong individualism in him which was so characteristically Protestant might have found expression in some new order or society in the mediaeval Church or in the Church of the counter-Reformation; there was no place for it in eighteenth-century Anglicanism. Dr. Rigg has spoken of Wesley as a possible Loyola of Protestantism, and later writers have compared him to Francis of Assisi; but he was neither so much the servant of an institution as the one nor so free from the ecclesiastical sense as the other. He was a strong Churchman with a very eclectic mind, prepared to surrender his dearest prejudices at the bidding of truth.

His early inclinations were those of a High Churchman,

in the eighteenth-century use of that term. His mother was a Jacobite and a believer in the divine right of kings. His father was chiefly moulded in thought by the Caroline divines. The influence of Oxford urged him in the same direction. The apostolic succession led him back in unbroken succession in the English Church to the apostles themselves; so the Oxford Methodists believed. Back to apostolic times, also, they sought to travel in order to discover the earliest forms of worship and service in the Church. This inquiry led them to frequent communion, regular fasting and almsgiving, and to some practices of the early days of Christianity that had disappeared from the life of the English Church altogether. The most consistent High Churchmen of the period had been the Non-Jurors, who refused to take the oath of allegiance to William III and had been therefore driven into a peculiar Nonconformity of their own. It is significant that, on his voyage to Georgia, five of the books that Wesley mentions in his *Journal* were written by Non-Jurors, while three came from the pens of Roman Catholics. It is not surprising that we should find him pressing the duty of confession on his sister Emily before he set sail for America and refusing the Sacrament to Dissenters in Georgia.[1] If he continued to study Church history there, it was the influence of these very German Dissenters that helped to set him free from the bondage of his institutionalism, quite as much as his reading. He was present at the election and ordination of one of the Moravian bishops, and was profoundly impressed by all he saw. 'The great simplicity, as well as solemnity, of the whole almost made me forget the seventeen hundred years between, and imagine myself in one of those assemblies where form and state were not, but Paul the tent-maker or Peter the fisherman presided, yet with the demonstration of the Spirit and of Power.'[2]

[1] See comments of Dr. Piette the Franciscan, in *La Réaction Wesléyenne dans l'évolution Protestante.*

[2] *Journal*, i. 170, 171.

Here we discover the dominant passion of this zealous chaplain of the S.P.G.; it was nothing less than the recovery of primitive Christianity. The study of the Fathers and of Wake and Cave and Fleury and Bingham was for no other purpose than this. This was to lead him gradually to simpler and more spiritual conceptions of the Church. This was to lead him later to innovations which went back to the Church of the first three centuries. The love feast or Agape, held in the evening when the day's work was done, survived for two centuries in the early Christian societies.[1] The watchnight service, the revival of lay preaching, the use of extempore prayer before the sermon, were to be justified on the same grounds. Visitors of the sick (though not called deacons and deaconesses) were said to be 'copied after the primitive Church.' Even the class meeting resembled the periodical gathering of catechumens in the early Church, while the quarterly tickets were compared to the *tesserae* and to the *commendatitia*, or commendatory letters, that were given to members so long ago. For the same reason his observance of frequent communion to the very close of his career is significant. We find in his later journals such passages as these: '*Sunday, Dec.* 25, 1774. During the twelve festival days we had the Lord's Supper daily; a little emblem of the primitive Church. May we be followers of them in all things as they were of Christ!' '*Sunday, March* 30, 1771, *Easter Day*. During the octave I administered the Lord's Supper every morning, after the example of the primitive Church.' New helpers were asked whether they constantly attended the church and the Sacrament, and, in a letter to the American brethren in 1784, the 'elders' were advised to administer the Supper of the Lord on every Lord's Day.[2] The fact that the Wesleys published a volume consisting of 166 hymns on the Lord's Supper, and prefixed it with an essay by Dr. Brevint on the Christian sacrament and sacrifice, has led to the idea

[1] Bingham, *Antiquities*, xv. 7. [2] Whitehead, pp. 327, 407.

that they approximated to the doctrine of transubstantiation in their belief. A careful examination of the hymns and the essay will show that this notion is incorrect; moreover, Wesley states the evangelical view with his customary clarity in criticizing the Roman catechism when he says, 'The virtue in the sacraments doth not proceed from the mere elements and words, but from the blessing of God in consequence of his promise to such only as rightly partake of them, and are qualified for it.'[1] It is not clear that Wesley ever held 'higher' views of the Sacrament than these, even during his ministry in Georgia. The great change that occurred about that time was in his view of Church order rather than of Church doctrine.

The real break with the materialistic conception of the Church occurred when he renounced the dogma of apostolic succession, of which, in 1761, he declared, 'I never could see it proved; and I am persuaded I never shall.'[2] At a later date he wrote in even stronger language against this 'fable.' It is a little difficult to say exactly when this change of attitude occurred. The two writers who had most to do with this change of mind were Edward Stillingfleet and Peter King. Now, Wesley read some book of Stillingfleet's before he left Georgia, and, in a letter written in July 1756, he said, 'I still believe "the episcopal form of Church government to be scriptural and apostolical." I mean, well agreeing with the practice and writings of the apostles. But that it is prescribed in Scripture, I do not believe. This opinion, which I once zealously espoused, I have been heartily ashamed of ever since I read Bishop Stillingfleet's *Irenicon*. I think he has unanswerably proved, "that neither Christ nor his apostles prescribed any form of Church government; and that the plea for diocesan episcopacy was never heard of in the primitive Church."' Once more we have the appeal to Scripture and the primitive Church which was final for Wesley. We must also remember that

[1] *Works*, x. 113. [2] *Journal*, iv. 438.

Stillingfleet was writing in 1659 under the Commonwealth, and pleading for an inclusive Church that would tolerate different parties within its borders. We need, therefore, not be surprised that Wesley puts the question at the Conference of 1745, 'Is Episcopal, Presbyterian, or Independent church government most agreeable to reason?' And seems to answer his own question in a way that would allow all three to answer 'Yes.' This important statement also shows (as Richard Watson pointed out) that, from the first, Wesley 'regarded his preachers, when called out and devoted to the work, as in respect of primitive antiquity, and the universal Church, parallel to deacons and presbyters. He also then thought himself a scriptural bishop.'[1] This minute is dated August 1745. On December 27 of the same year he prints in his *Journal* a letter to his brother-in-law, Hall, in which he upholds the doctrines of the apostolic succession and of the threefold order of the ministry. Three weeks later he publishes his definite renunciation of these very dogmas as a result of reading Lord Chancellor King's *Account of the Primitive Church*.[2] So far as we know, he maintained from this date to the end of his life the conviction that 'bishops and presbyters are (essentially) of one order, and that originally every Christian congregation was a church independent on all others.'

So it came to pass, as Wesley said to Samuel Walker of Truro, that while he remained loyal to the worship and doctrine of the Church of England, his attachment to her 'orders and laws' was considerably shaken.[3] To the day of his death he maintained his attachment to the ordinances of his Church, but he had no concern for that which seemed to be merely traditional in religion. His soul demanded spiritual reality, and if the existing organizations could not provide for it, so much the worse for the organizations. The hierarchy of the Church was

[1] Watson, *Works*, v. 145.
[2] See *W. H. S. Proceedings*, xv., pp. 9–14.
[3] *Works*, xii. 195.

of less significance than the salvation of the people. The Church as a political establishment was to him a mere 'external' on which he could not waste his time. 'Let it stand for me,' he says to his brother Charles. 'I neither set it up nor pull it down. But let you and I build up the city of God.'[1] Yet the sin of schism is a very real thing and 'to separate ourselves from a body of living Christians, with whom we were before united, is a grievous breach of the law of love.'[2] It can be pardoned only under the plea of direst necessity. The Protestant schisms were not schisms at all in his view, for Luther and Calvin were violently thrust out of the Church of Rome by the errors and corruptions of that Church.[3]

It will be clear even from such a summary of Wesley's views on this great question, that we are not to expect perfect consistency from him. Nor do we find it. He was often like the man in the *Pilgrim's Progress* rowing one way and looking another. Sentiment prevented any definite severance of the Methodist societies from the Established Church during his life-time, though their attachment to that Church never had any reality about it. Wesley's claim that his cure of souls was wider than any English parish, his irregular ministry in the open-air, his employment of lay preachers and finally his ordinations of presbyters for the work in Scotland and England, and of superintendents in America, made the severance inevitable. His last reason for this decisive step in appointing Methodist bishops to America brings us face to face with the dominant conception that must have controlled him through all his evangelical career: 'As our American brethren are now totally disentangled, both from the State and from the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again, either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty simply to follow the Scriptures and the primitive Church, and we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty wherewith God

[1] *Works*, xii. 118. [2] *Ib.*, vi. 406. [3] *Ib.*, vii. 182.

has so strangely made them free.'[1] This spiritual freedom to follow the practice and to imbibe the spirit of 'primitive Christianity' was, therefore, Wesley's ideal, and, in spite of his aversion from schism, he knew that it was possible to leave *a* church without leaving *the* Church.[2] His great sense of historic continuity and reverence for existing order was ultimately controlled by his undying hunger for that spiritual fellowship of believers with one another in the communion of the living Lord, which is the only true Church of Christ.

We are, therefore, now ready to appreciate his more formal definitions, and naturally turn first of all to his sermon (lxxiv.) on the Church. 'The Catholic or universal Church,' he says, 'is all the persons in the universe whom God hath so called out of the world as to be "one body," united by "one spirit," having "one faith, one hope, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all."' This definition agreed with the nineteenth Article of Religion, only that Article included a little more than the Apostle expressed by stressing the preaching of the 'pure word of God' and the due administration of the sacraments. In his *Letter to a Roman Catholic* (1749) he is a little more explicit. 'I believe that Christ by His apostles gathered unto Himself a Church, to which He has continually added such as shall be saved; that this catholic, that is, universal, Church, extending to all nations and all ages, is holy in all its members, who have fellowship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that they have fellowship with the holy angels, who constantly minister to these heirs of Salvation; and with all the living members of Christ on Earth, as well as all who are departed in His faith and fear.' His fullest statement, however, is to be found in a letter to the *London Chronicle*, written on Feb. 19, 1761. 'The Catholic Church is a society founded by Christ Himself, and by His commission propagated throughout the world, which shall flourish till time shall

[1] *Journal*, vii. 17. [2] *Works*, xii. 155.

end. It is the whole body of men, endued with faith, working by love, dispersed over the whole earth, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. And this Church is " ever one." In all ages and nations it is the one body of Christ. It is " ever holy " ; for no unholy man can possibly be a member of it. It is " ever orthodox " ; so is every holy man in all things necessary to Salvation ; " secured against error," in all things essential, " by the perpetual presence of Christ ; and ever directed by the Spirit of Truth," in the truth that is after godliness. This Church has " a perpetual succession of pastors and teachers, divinely appointed and divinely assisted." '[1]

These quotations are given at length so that there should be no possible doubt concerning Wesley's view of the Church. In essence he was one with Luther and Calvin and all evangelical leaders of the Reformed Churches. It is only your true Evangelical who can be truly Catholic, whether he call himself Greek, Roman, Anglican, or Reformed in his allegiance. Real unity can only come from the Gospel given to sinful man in Jesus Christ, and the sinner's love for and faith in the Common Saviour. A Roman Catholic, like Dr. Piette, may not like the idea that Wesley's evangelical conversion is merely the restatement of Luther's heresy of justification by faith, and may prefer to say that the ' heart strangely warmed ' is the result of a new sense of the love of God.[2] Wesley would not have recognized the difference. Faith, working by love in him, as in Luther, meant a new birth. It has meant the same to all the saints of the Church, whether they were Roman mystics who saw the face of Christ through the incense smoke of the altar, or Quaker devotees of social service, beholding the face of their Lord in the most miserable of ' these my brethren.' The

[1] *Journal*, iv. 436.

[2] *Piette*, p. 445, ' Tout bien considéré, le rôle que l'on doit reconnaître à l'intervention de Böhler n'est pas d'avoir initié John Wesley au dogme luthérien de la foi sans les œuvres mais de lui avoir fait voir la place capitale que doit occuper dans la vie chrétienne l'amour de Dieu.'

essence of the Christian religion must be very simple ; it is the love of God and the love of man, kindled by One who brought God and man together in the most intimate union known.

If there was any distinctive note that Methodism contributed to the doctrine of the Church it was the emphasis that it laid on Christian fellowship. These lovers of their Lord joined in the intimate society of the class meeting found a strange new love for one another. As with the early Christians, it was deepened by persecutions ; the scorn of the world made the despised family of God all the dearer to them. The definitions of the Church that we have quoted from Wesley's writings need, therefore, the hymns of the fellowship for their commentary. The real significance of the Church comes out on every page of the old Hymn-Book. For the Society Meeting, Giving Thanks, Praying, Parting. For Believers, Rejoicing, Fighting, Praying, Walking, Working, Suffering, Seeking for Full Redemption, Saved, Interceding for the World ; there is not one of these familiar ' sections ' of *Wesley's Hymns* that does not invite quotation. Only by the study of them all, and by the love of the Fellowship, can we know what the Church means to a true Methodist. We must be content with one quotation. In 1743 John Wesley published *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, and at the end was a poem of thirty stanzas called ' Primitive Christianity.' Part of it is very familiar, since it reappeared in the Hymn-Book and has kept its place there.

Happy the souls that first believed,
To Jesus and each other cleaved,
Joined by the unction from above
In mystic fellowship of love !

Meek, simple followers of the Lamb,
They lived, and spake, and thought the same ;
Brake the commemorative bread,
And drank the Spirit of their Head.

Then he turns from this 'age of golden days' and turns to the differing sects of his own day, inquiring of them 'where the Christians live.'

> Scatter'd o'er all the earth they lie,
> Till Thou collect them with Thine eye,
> Draw by the magic of Thy name,
> And charm into a beauteous frame.
>
> O might my lot be cast with these;
> The least of Jesu's witnesses:
> O that my Lord would count me meet
> To wash His dear disciples' feet!
>
> This only thing do I require:
> Thou know'st 'tis all my heart's desire,
> Freely what I receive to give,
> The servant of Thy church to live:
>
> After my lowly Lord to go,
> And wait upon Thy saints below;
> Enjoy the grace to angels given,
> And serve the royal heirs of heaven.[1]

The societies for which these hymns were written, in which they found the deepest longings of the spirit expressed, were divided into classes of about a dozen members in each. Week by week they were met by their leader and confessed their weaknesses and temptations to one another, mourned over each other's sorrows, and rejoiced in each other's victories. This remarkable organization continues to this day, though the regularity of its meetings, and the modes of its attempt to pool religious experience, have been changed by modern conditions of life, and (it must be admitted) by changes in religious experience itself. Membership of the societies is now regarded as equivalent to Church membership, and is, therefore, one of those imperfect approximations by which we endeavour to make the earthly instrument that we call the Church correspond to the heavenly

[1] *Poetical Works of J. and C. Wesley*, v. 479–84.

reality. As it is administered to-day it is probably neither better nor worse than the approximations to Church membership found in other communions. At its best it was the most searching and effective test of spiritual reality in the Christian life that any Church has ever applied. Even the Roman discipline, in its most exacting form, made less severe demands, and never achieved the same measure of delight in Christian duty that was found in the class meeting.

'The class meeting among the Methodists,' said Dr. W. B. Pope, 'is their method of meeting one of the greatest difficulties of the time. It does not profess to impose a new condition of membership of the Christian Church. It is only one out of many forms—certainly the most widespread and permanent—which the Ecclesiola in Ecclesia, or the society within the Church, has assumed. No religious community has long maintained its vigour and purity without some such expedient. This one, in particular, honours the Church's note of external sanctity by admitting freely every anxious applicant on the sole condition that he is a baptized member of the Church of Christ, is desirous to flee from the wrath to come, and to find salvation in the name of Jesus. It brings every one under personal supervision, direct or indirect; indirect, as the leaders of these classes are themselves part of the minister's flock, and direct, inasmuch as these little companies are under the discipline of a quarterly visitation. This institution provides the means of mutual social edification, in addition to the general means of grace, and thus does much to promote both external and the internal sanctity of the community. Apart from its modern name, this form of fellowship may be traced almost up to the times of the apostles.'[1] The balanced and careful phraseology of the trained theologian of half a century ago may not give us the reality of to-day, but it does give the class meeting its natural place in Methodism. The warmth and vitality of the fellowships

[1] Pope, *Christian Theology*, iii., 279.

is frozen in the definition; the triumphant hymns, the fervent prayers, the humorous and pathetic 'experiences' are generalized into 'means of mutual self-edification,' but the essential facts are there. To-day, Methodists evolve new means of fellowship, but the fact remains that, wherever Christianity is vital, 'some such expedient' has been necessary. With painful uniformity, one Methodist writer after another has referred to the class meeting as the germ-cell of the Church. A study of the hymns for the society (which are essentially class-meeting hymns) will show how true a metaphor this is. Like the embryonic-cell, the true class meeting grew by division. Like attracted like. 'Come thou with us and we will do thee good,' was the warm welcoming greeting of its missionary-hearted members. Or as they quaintly phrased it in song,

> If thy heart be as mine,
> If for Jesus it pine,
> Come up into the chariot of love.

There was in the class meeting, of course, all the danger of eccentric individualism which has always found religion a rich soil in which to flourish. It is, however, the strength of such a fellowship, that unbalanced experience is corrected by the steadier judgement of others. In the sympathetic fellowship of a truly spiritual Church, a body of priests unto God, is better hope of wise direction than in the direction of the confessional. Occasionally the expert in casuistry, if he be exceptionally endowed with knowledge of the human heart, may be more helpful to the perplexed than such a fellowship, but, as a general rule it is the body of Christ that will help us more than the individual. Moreover, the ideal spiritual guide is found as frequently among laymen as among the consecrated priests of the Church. Certainly it is one of the functions of a spiritual fellowship to prevent excess and morbid exaggeration. Moreover, the remarkable

Connexional system of Methodism, its itinerant ministry, its highly centralized organization, has had the same effect in checking excesses while it runs the risk of creating uniform mediocrity of religious life when the lamps burn low, with the corresponding privilege of quickened vitality everywhere in better days. In the same way, because the class meeting is a cell and not an isolated organism, the combined judgement and cumulative experience of the whole Church is available for all. The continuity of the divine life is preserved.

> The gift which He on one bestows,
> We all delight to prove;
> The grace through every vessel flows,
> In purest streams of love.

What we have tried to say about the significance of the class meeting in defining the Church has been admirably stated by a more recent theologian than W. B. Pope, equally revered as a great Christian teacher and perhaps more typically Methodist. 'To us the Church is not the priesthood, the ritual, the form of sacrament or government; it is the society of Jesus. We find its germ-cell in the little company of brother disciples gathered round the Master in common talk and at a common table. The entire aggregate of the Christian Church throughout the world is formed by the repetition, multiplication, and reproduction, in ten thousand varied forms, of that germ-cell; it is the development of the original communion of Christ and His spiritual brethren. Wherever that society is reproduced, in a Methodist class meeting or elsewhere, in the companies of friends and brothers drawn heart to heart by the music of His name, there is the fellowship of the first ages; there is visible by its looks of gladness and affection, and audible by its songs of praise and words of sweet counsel, the authentic and living Church of Christ Jesus the Lord. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am

I in the midst," He said. That sentence is the charter, and the rule of our Church life.'[1]

After that, little more need be added. It will be seen at once that Findlay and Wesley are one. The earlier teacher was at times embarrassed by his own ecclesiastical training and responsibilities, but, when he comes to the marks of the Catholic Church, he says in the speech of the eighteenth century what Dr. Findlay says in that of the twentieth century. It may, however, be well to glance over the changes that took place in that momentous nineteenth century when the Methodist influence worked like leaven in English and American life, and the societies themselves were split up in the turbulent political and religious movements of the time. For Wesley, the societies were never an end in themselves, but a means to the recovery of primitive Christianity. Whether they could serve that purpose better by an independent existence or by some vague attachment to the Established Church was a moot point during his lifetime. He, at least, would never by any decisive action make the existing severance from the Establishment a real and permanent one by authorizing all his preachers to administer the sacraments and holding their services in Church hours during his own lifetime. The step was inevitable after his death. Only a small proportion of the members of his societies had ever known any real allegiance to the Church of England. The majority had been gathered from the unchurched mass of the population ; many had come from Dissenting circles. They had no desire to go to the parish church to receive the Sacrament at the hands of an indifferent and often hostile clergyman, and could not see why they should do so. A minority desired to maintain this shadowy association, and resented the idea that the preachers should take upon themselves the full responsibilities of an ordained ministry. Some of the most eminent preachers also supported this contention. For some years the minority prevailed. The people

[1] Findlay, *The Church of Christ as set forth in the New Testament*, pp. 75, 76.

generally were, however, determined to obtain the full ecclesiastical 'rights,' as they termed them. The agitation in demand of them was increased by the fact that many Methodists were still being repelled from the Lord's table by the clergy. So it came to pass that, four years after Wesley's death, the Plan of Pacification was adopted (1795), by which a way was opened to the societies for obtaining, one by one, as they should demand them, the church privileges which they had so long desired. In virtue of that plan the Methodist preachers became ministers in the full sense, and Methodism became manifestly, what it had long been virtually, a separate Church. The next step to be taken was to admit the societies into some share of the government of a free and voluntary Church, and the first step in the direction of lay co-operation was taken at the Conference of 1797.

It was not until 1891 that the Wesleyan Methodist Conference claimed the title of Church. A hundred years after Wesley's death the Conference declared that 'the title hitherto used is not, and never has been, inconsistent with the assertion, for "the people called Methodists," of a true and proper position as a Church, with all the authorities, privileges, and responsibilities belonging to the New Testament Church.'[1] With all our esteem for John Wesley, it may be added that it will be a happy day when the adjective Wesleyan disappears from the title of the Church; there is no place there for the name of any individual other than that of the Church's Founder and Head. The Society of Jesus was the name chosen for the order founded by Ignatius Loyola. John Wesley would have made an admirable general of any religious order, but he would never have allowed his own name to be part of the official title of the order. Even the Salvation Army has not permitted the name of Booth to appear in its title. Wesley, with his stronger ecclesiastical sense, would have been still more careful to avoid such

[1] *Minutes*, 1891, pp. 321.

a 'rock of offence.' He allowed the united societies to be called 'the people called Methodists,' and adopted with pride a nickname that had at first been given in derision. We can imagine that he would have recoiled with horror from the title of a book written by one of the most enthusiastic Wesley students of our own time: *John Wesley, Christian Philosopher and Church Founder.* The application of that term Church Founder to any other than to Him who is the Architect (τεχνίτης) and Artisan (δημιουργός) of the City of God implies a lack of sensitiveness to certain aspects of the sanctity of the Church which has been, unfortunately, common in the Methodism of the nineteenth century. That era of progress was remarkable in the display of British energy and individualism all over the world. Men of marked personality abounded everywhere. Undoubtedly they wrought righteousness, subdued kingdoms, and stopped the mouths of lions, but their abounding vitality brought with it some compensating disadvantages. In Methodism an excessive individualism was apt to disregard the obligations due to the whole fellowship. An unfortunate tendency towards sectarianism was the result. The blame for this tendency was by no means applicable only to those who broke away from the main body, but, as we look back, we cannot but regret that the strong and fervently evangelical societies that entered upon the work of the nineteenth century with such ardour did not march forward as a united host and remain so organized to the end. 'Many of those who profess much religion, nay, and really enjoy a measure of it, have not the least conception of "the sin of separation." They leave a Christian society with as much unconcern as they go out of one room into another. They give occasion to all this complicated mischief, and wipe their mouth, and say they have done no evil!'[1]

Not that a Methodist could argue for any artificial unity in the Church. 'It must be obvious to every

[1] *Works*, vi. 409.

dispassionate mind,' says Dr. Pope, ' that there has never been, since the times of the apostles, any other unity than that which God alone can discern.'[1] A dull uniformity is an ideal which can commend itself to no one. Within limits, the very variety of Church government and Christian life and worship has served the varying needs of men and of the Church itself. ' Though variety is ordained of God, the nearer to uniformity, or at least to thorough mutual recognition, the estate of Christendom can be made, the better will it be for its peace and dignity and prosperity. In due time, Christ, who at His first coming " made both one," uniting Jews and Gentiles, will blend all communions into unity, and His Church shall by His presence be, in all its multitudes of branches, " made perfect in one." '[2] Wesley himself would go as far as this in allowing variety within the Church. The *Minutes* for 1747 contain a series of interesting questions and answers on this subject.

Q. 12. Must there not be numberless accidental varieties in the government of various Churches ?

A. There must, in the nature of things. For as God variously dispenses His gifts of nature, providence, and grace, both the offices themselves and the officers in each ought to be varied from time to time.

Q. 13. Why is it that there is no determinate plan of Church government appointed in Scripture ?

A. Without doubt because the wisdom of God had a regard to this necessary variety.

Q. 14. Was there any thought of uniformity in the government of all Churches until the time of Constantine ?

A. It is certain there was not ; and would not have been then, had men consulted the word of God only.

The twentieth century is teaching us that the Christian forces must come closer together. Unnecessary divisions must be removed. Complete Christian unity has awakened a new echo in the hearts of men. The Lambeth Appeal was not only a challenge, but a hope. The reply

[1] Pope, *Christian Theology*, iii. 273. [2] *Ib.*, iii. 275.

of the Wesleyan Conference of 1922 was in accordance with the best traditions of all Methodists, from the days of Wesley onwards. 'We also deeply deplore the broken unity which has been only too long and too painfully visible in the Church relationships of fellow Christians, and we are increasingly sensible of the far-reaching evil effects of disunion.'[1] At the same time it was stated quite clearly that no form of Church polity had been prescribed, either in the teaching of our Lord or in any part of the New Testament, as essential to the Church. The Conference did not discuss the claim that the 'historic episcopate' should be a *sine qua non* of reunion, but it did declare that 'we could not, under any circumstances, consent to limit the freedom of fellowship which we already enjoy with non-episcopalian Churches.' The whole document is worthy of careful study, since it helps us to understand the place of Methodism in the catholic Church, affirming the principles of the Reformation, accepting the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds 'with reasonable liberty of interpretation,' and the two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper as 'instituted for His Church by Christ Himself.' This reply avoids unnecessary controversy, appeals for further inquiry and co-operation, and is an admirable expression of that catholic spirit on which John Wesley preached from the delightful text, 'Is thy heart right as my heart with thy heart? If it be, give me thy hand.'

We should, however, be more than reluctant to surrender our Christian liberty, either to State control or to conceptions of the Church that cannot but appear materialistic to us. We come back inevitably to the simplest definitions of the Church. The Church of God is 'the holy community of Christ's people, summoned from the world by the call of the gospel heralds, and united in work and worship as citizens of the heavenly Kingdom.' It is 'the body of the recognized citizens

[1] *Summary of Methodist Law and Discipline*, p. 599; or *Minutes*, 1922, pp. 85–9. See also *United Methodist Minutes*, 1929, pp. 5-8.

of the Kingdom of God.' 'The ministry exists for the sake of the Church, and arises out of the Church, not vice versa. We disavow sacerdotalism; we disavow, also, clericalism, which is a distinct and only less dangerous perversion of Church office. The apostles were disciples first, and brethren first, before they were apostles. They were disciples and brethren always and to the last. . . . Christ's people are a spiritual people, filled with the Holy Ghost; and every one of them has spiritual qualities and spiritual duties and preaching, teaching, public prayer, the care of souls—in all these the ministry has a principal and directing part, but not an exclusive property. Even in establishing the sacraments, and committing them to His apostles, our Lord does not prescribe their administration by a definite order of men. That the two sacraments should be ordinarily dispensed by those who are set apart to preach the gospel is in our view a matter of obvious fitness, and belongs to the doing of things decently and in order. It concerns the well-being, not the very being, of the Church.'[1] There is here no belittling of the visible Church of Christ. 'There are many communions of Christians in the world, differing in race and language, in doctrine and usage; yet all these, though now scattered and divided, form one Church universal in Him by whose name they are called.'[2]

The Methodists explain their separate existence as a religious community by the fact that they were created by the Spirit of God to remind the universal Church of certain forgotten or neglected factors of the Christian life. The contribution they were called to make to the enrichment of the doctrine of the Church was the beauty and strength of a true Christian fellowship. They should therefore be the very first to respond to any new movement of the Spirit of God towards Christian reunion, for they should be hungry to share their fellowship in Christ with all branches of the Christian communion. The

[1] Findlay, *The Church of Christ*, pp. 12, 14, 36.
[2] Catechism, *Minutes*, 1924, p. 294.

reunited fellowship must, however, go back constantly to the New Testament for its ideals. It must meditate with St. Paul in prison on the Church as God's city, God's temple, God's household, God's habitation. The Methodists in their best days have always cherished all these conceptions of the Church. 'The Best of all is God is with us,' said John Wesley on his death-bed. To hold that consciousness, not only in all our sessions of worship, but in all society and circuit meetings, in our synods and Conferences, is our safest guarantee of the future. If in common worship we may sing:

> Lo! God is here! let us adore,
> And own how dreadful is this place!

we shall also enjoy the highest privileges of the family circle and find new meaning in the ecstatic words:

> And if our fellowship below
> In Jesus be so sweet,
> What heights of rapture shall we know,
> When round His throne we meet!

So the habitation of God becomes God's household. It is also the temple, for we sing again:

> Happy the men to whom 'tis given
> To dwell within that gate of heaven,
> And in Thy house record Thy praise;
> Whose strength and confidence Thou art,
> Who feel Thee, Saviour, in their heart,
> The Way, the Truth, the Life of grace.

We cannot, however, be content to enjoy the privileges of the chosen family circle in the sheltered precincts of the temple without endeavouring to share them with all the world. We belong to the City of God, but we desire that city to embrace the whole human family. We must, therefore, as citizens of the Jerusalem that is above,

continually strive to make all earthly institutions conform to the principles of the heavenly republic.

> Us, who climb Thy holy hill
> A general blessing make,
> Let the world our influence feel
> Our Gospel grace partake,

is our prayer. Or again:

> To serve the present age,
> My calling to fulfil:
> O may it all my powers engage
> To do my Master's will!

The early Methodists expressed their ideals in song. Theirs was no mean conception of the Church; indeed, it was the highest of High Church doctrine. It cannot be denied that it differs widely from conceptions of the meaning of the Church held in Roman Catholic and Anglo-Catholic circles. The gospel is, however, wider than the measures of Rome or Canterbury. Limited and erroneous views of the Church will not be corrected by the presentation of an impoverished vision of the Body of Christ. The United Methodism of the future, in co-operation with all who hold the Head, has a great mission in presenting to men the beauty and abiding worth of the greatest institution in the world, the Church of the Living God.

Part II

THE MISSION

VIII

METHODIST EVANGELISM

By J. Ernest Rattenbury, D.D.

The greatest hinderance (to seeking and saving the lost) you are to expect from rich, cowardly, or lazy Methodists. But regard them not, neither stewards, leaders, or people. Whenever the weather permits, go out in God's name into the most public places, and call all to repent and believe the Gospel: every Sunday in particular: especially where there are old societies unless they settle upon their lees. The stewards will frequently oppose this, lest they lose their normal collection. But this is not a sufficient reason against it. Shall we barter souls for money?—

John Wesley, *Large Minutes*, 1780.

The methods of evangelism are not matters of supreme importance. 'They have their day and cease to be.' The naïve notion that the right method is all that is wanted for successful evangelism is dying, and, one may hope, will soon be dead.

> God fulfils Himself in many ways
> Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

And, perhaps, no ritualism is quite so offensive as the unintelligent use of a played-out evangelistic method.

What is primary is, not method, but the message and its substance. What evangel have we to give to the people, or have we one? Is there any meaning in such terms as Methodist evangelism or modern evangelism? Can we speak to the twentieth century with the awakening voice of the Wesleys in the eighteenth, or the Primitive Methodists in the nineteenth? Are we under obligation to do so? If Methodism is to have a life continuous with her own past, and a justification for her future existence,

she must do something more than preserve herself as a religious society ministering to her own children. If she has a message to deliver, she must be propagandist. In a day when, to say nothing of the heathen world, the majority of the English people are outside the Churches, the field is wide enough. The problem for the new Methodism is how to find an entrance into the heart of the people with the same fervour and converting power as our fathers did, and this, I affirm, depends only in a very secondary way upon the methods we use, but almost entirely upon the message we deliver, its religious truth, the intensity with which we experience it, and the conviction with which we bear witness. The real question, then, for Methodism is her message and experience, and as to whether she believes it is really needed by the people of our age.

I. Let us first of all consider the original message of Methodism, and the form through which, and the men by whom, it has been transmitted to our age, and the changes which have modified, reshaped, or nullified it. We need not dwell on the methods of the Wesleys; they were simplicity itself. Men, with a gospel which they experienced, went into the open air and preached it, and provided, as they were needed, a series of institutions to conserve the individual and social life of those who had accepted their message. What does concern us is the message they delivered and the causes of its success, both as we find them in the message and experience of the early preachers, and in the mentality and the response of their early hearers; and to see how far the comparative poverty of our own impact on our age is accounted for by the difference between their experience and witness and our own.

There is no better way of understanding the work of the Wesleys than to study the Contents Table of John Wesley's own collection of hymns published in 1780. The careful method by which he systematized the hymns, and the purposes for which he arranged them, enable us to

understand the early Methodist conviction and procedure. The hymn-book was not regarded by Wesley as a comprehensive book of Methodist devotion—nor did he think of Methodist services as complete forms of church worship. The first collected hymn-book was the first supplement; only what was supplemented was the liturgies of the Church of England which he expected his people to use, and the services which he desired them to attend. He quite plainly regarded his normal Methodist service as defective worship. The book was for evangelistic services chiefly in the open air, and for the societies which had been formed out of those 'groaning for redemption' who had been collected there. And for this reason it reveals the soul of Methodism as evangelism.

Part I. of the Table of Contents reads: Sect. 1, Exhorting and beseeching Sinners to return to God; sect. 2, Describing (1) The Pleasantness of Religion, (2) The Goodness of God, (3) Death, (4) Judgement, (5) Heaven, (6) Hell; sect. 3, Praying for a Blessing.

Then Part II. goes on to classify Religions as Formal and Inward.

Part III. deals with Penitents.

Parts IV. and V., For Believers and the Society.

Now what is of outstanding importance for our study is that Wesley begins in Part I., sect. 1, by setting down hymns of exhortation and invitation to outsiders, and goes on in sect. 2 to select others, describing the grounds on which his exhortations and invitations are given, such as 'the Goodness of God,' 'Hell,' and 'Heaven.'

Behind Part I. of the Contents Table we can visualize the great evangelist, in the open air, first reading and then singing two lines of the hymn he announced and then another two lines to the end. The hymns are confident appeals by men who have experienced the gospel to those who have not—and particularly to the outcast and disinherited. They are quite sure that they have something to communicate that will make a difference, they proclaim a gospel—'good news.'

'O for a thousand tongues to sing,' 'Come, sinners, to the gospel feast,' 'Sinners turn, why will ye die?' 'Sinners obey the gospel word,' 'O all that pass by, to Jesus draw near,' 'Ho! every one that thirsts, draw nigh!' are the principal hymns of exhortation. Perhaps the confidence that they had something to give was never better expressed than in the words,

> Come, sinners, to the gospel feast,
> Let every soul be Jesu's guest;
> Ye need not one be left behind,
> For God hath bidden all mankind.
>
> Sent by my Lord, on you I call;
> The invitation is to all:
> Come, all the world; come, sinner, thou!
> All things in Christ are ready now.
>
> My message as from God receive,
> Ye all may come to Christ, and live;
> O let his love your heart constrain,
> Nor suffer Him to die in vain!

Now this invitation was not made on an unreasoned basis. The grounds of it were quite simple; the men who gave it had proved that religion was joyous. So we find hymns describing 'The Pleasantness of Religion.' The first on which the Wesleys made their appeal was Dr. Watts's 'Come, ye that love the Lord,' and the last of the section the hymn, unfortunately, except for two verses, omitted from modern Methodist hymn-books, which definitely describes the joy, riches, power, dignity, and divine greatness of the early Methodist:

> We through the Holy Ghost
> Can witness better things;
> For He whose blood is all our boast
> Hath made us priests and kings.

But what is even of greater importance to an understanding of the Methodist appeal is the hymns of the next

section, ' The Goodness of God.' In what way did those heroic evangelists teach that God is good? Almost entirely by means of the Cross of Christ. There is no hymn in the section which finds God's goodness in His providential care, nor in His works of nature ; their burden is, God is good because Jesus died. The great truth to them was the truth the Wesleys had themselves experienced at the cross. ' He loved me and gave Himself for me.' Of those hymns there are sixteen ; eleven of them (including ' Would Jesus have the sinner die? ' ' Behold the Saviour of mankind,' ' Extended on a cursed tree,' ' I thirst Thou wounded Lamb of God ') are hymns about the death of Christ, and the other five, which all glorify the Saviour, have reference to His death. It has been little noted that when the Wesleys said ' The goodness of God,' what they meant was that the Son of God incarnate died for our sins. That was so much the greatest part of their meaning and message that their teaching is not otherwise intelligible. Now the other ground of their appeal is different. It is fourfold, and is made by the facts of Death, Judgement, Heaven, and Hell. The hymns about heaven are more numerous than the hymns about hell, on which, significantly, there is only one, though it contains the gruesome verse :

> While they enjoy His heavenly love,
> Must I in torments dwell?
> And howl while they sing songs above
> And blow the flames of hell?

This is, of course, terrifying, as I found it in my own childhood, but it is quite exceptional. The hymns do not paint lurid pictures of hell, though the hymns on Death and Judgement have references to hell. The fact of death was undoubtedly emphasized in the appeal, and the issues of death and judgement were clearly sung, although, for Christians, death was regarded as a delightful experience. ' Ah lovely appearance of death ' is the beginning

of one hymn in which Charles Wesley seems to join hands with Francis of Assisi, who thanked God for ' my sister the death of the body.' But the facts of death and judgement were never far distant in the Wesleys' teaching. They are not, however, in the foreground. As I write I am looking at a copy of Fra Angelico's ' Crucifixion.' The background is a dense black thundercloud, with a strip of blue beneath, which defines the awful blackness of the cloud. The cloud is the background, and the Cross and the Crucified are the foreground.

That seems to me to picture what the Wesleys felt and taught. In the background the clouds of Judgement, but in the centre, making one forget the clouds, the Cross of the Saviour ; and so they sang :

> Would Jesus have the sinner die ?
> Why hangs He then on yonder tree ?

And it must be noted that it is the contrast between their sense of guilt and judgement and God's love in Christ's death that makes Wesley proclaim the divine love with such exultation of spirit. His preaching of love had the rapture of a new discovery.

Now what principles can we deduce from these facts ? It is quite plain that the Wesleys had certain beliefs and experiences of which they were confident, and which compelled utterance. They had discovered for themselves, by faith in Christ, peace, joy, confidence, newness of life, and supernatural power. Their belief in the doctrines of grace had been quickened by experience of the power of divine love.

They had no doubt that the love of God which had emancipated them could set all men at liberty. They were not troubled by psychological analyses of their experiences. They accepted the inspiration of Scripture without question. They believed that heaven, hell, and judgement were facts. Their own sense of guilt as sinful men, impotent to fulfil their own ideals, had been acute.

Their sense of communion with God was radiant and constant, at least after the experience of full assurance into which they entered. A like untroubled faith and confidence characterized the early Methodist preachers. Such men as Haime, who were the victims of religious melancholy, had no doubt about the truth of Scripture, of the reality of hell and judgement, or of the power of Christ to save. Haime's doubt was whether his own sin when a soldier-preacher in the Netherlands had made salvation impossible for him. These men invited others to a 'Gospel feast.' They had themselves partaken of an unspeakable gift, and offered it confidently, with the authority, not of the scribe, but of the experient. Their faith, if it had been weak, must have been abundantly confirmed by the results. But behind their experience was the acceptance of the Protestant doctrines of Scripture, sin, atonement, heaven, hell, and judgement. These were postulates of faith they neither discussed nor analysed, but assumed.

Moreover, the people to whom they offered salvation had little difficulty in receiving the message. I do not mean by that that Wesley's doctrines were acceptable to all men. The controversies he engaged in show the contrary to be the truth. It would not be true to say he influenced no cultured men and women; he did; but, on the whole, he did not seek them. And the man of taste, from the time of Celsus to the aristocratic lady who told Lady Huntingdon that she disliked being 'evened with the common worms that crawl the ground,' has always, to use John Foster's phrase, had 'an aversion to evangelical religion.' The people whom the Wesleys invited to the feast came from the highways and the hedges, and were not versed in the niceties of theological discussion. Their godlessness arose, not from unbelief, but from ignorance and vice. They believed in God, in the Bible as His undoubted word, heaven, hell, judgement and in the atoning efficacy of Christ's death. And, although the message of universal salvation to *every one*

that believeth, and the possibility of *any one* entering into religious joy, was probably a novel doctrine to them, there were no fundamental difficulties of belief with which they had to contend. The chief difference between early Methodist preacher and early Methodist hearer was that the one experienced the doctrine that the other believed but did not experience.

Such facts as these are necessary in any fair account of the eighteenth-century Revival. The men with the burning message, who by their action staked their very life on its truth, made such an appeal to the people of England that those who slept were awakened out of their slumber, and the spiritual life of the country was renewed. These facts must also be remembered if we are to make fair comparisons with our own age.

II. It is quite evident that Methodism in 1933 will face a situation very different from that of the eighteenth century. Can it be possibly dealt with in the old way? Is Methodist Evangelism possible in the new age?

Before we diagnose the present situation, and consider the contemporary problem, we must review the intervening years. How far has Wesley's message been effective since he died? How far has Methodism failed to be a Church of Propagandist Evangelism, striving to win heathen England to Christ? Future historians of Methodism will have to give more attention than has been given to the century (111 years, to be exact) beginning with the death of Wesley and ending with the death of Hugh Price Hughes. Notwithstanding the general domesticity rather than publicity of the period, it had its flaming moments when the original fires were re-lighted. The moments were dangerous, as winds and fires are to houses, to the stability of the Society. In the early nineteenth century, Bourne and Clowes were right in calling themselves Primitive Methodists. They returned to the primitive open-air evangelism which created the movement, and, by their splendid devotion to the ideals of the gospel for all men, did a work of evangelism

surpassed by none ; but separation from the parent stem resulted.

The Primitive Methodist delivered the message of the Wesleys, and delivered it to people whose beliefs were not different from those of their ancestors, to whom Wesley spoke. This is also true of the Salvation Army—the message and the experience were not materially changed, and the results were similar. The effectiveness of the evangelical message proved itself again. But separation was the result of the fiery energy of the new evangelism.

The third great event, to some extent influenced by the ' Army ' Revival, was the Wesleyan Forward Movement of which the dynamic personal force was Hugh Price Hughes. He shook Methodism out of her self-complacency and bade her look out on the heathen masses. The Forward Movement expressed itself in great central missions. Manchester, Birmingham, and Leeds, as well as the London Missions, were quickly organized. The attack on the world was ardent, ingenious, many-sided, but always at its centre evangelical. The spiritual vitality of all the great Central Missions was created by almost miraculous conversions. I can testify the truth of that a few years later at Nottingham. The accent of the preaching may have differed in immaterial particulars, but the message of Hughes, Chadwick, Edward Smith, Wiseman, and Collier, the early leaders, was, in every essential matter, the message of the Wesleys redelivered in the last decades of the nineteenth century. It found the response of the people as enthusiastic and uncritical as it was in earlier periods.

It was the preaching of God's love to sinful men, and the gospel of immediate salvation for those who submitted to Christ and trusted Him. I well remember a speech of F. L. Wiseman—a young man then, and a great missioner —which claimed that the distinctive doctrine of Methodism was *immediate* conversion. It was illustrated from his mission experiences in Birmingham. I do not assert that the emphasis of Hugh Price Hughes was exactly

that of John Wesley, but I do claim that his message of God's unconditional love was. More than other evangelists, perhaps, he stressed the necessity of submission to the will of God. But the reality of God's pardoning love, the need of it by sinful men, the ability to do all things in Christ, who really lived and pardoned and saved, the gladness of assurance of salvation, the hopelessness of no human being, were taught with a conviction and vigour never to be forgotten, and enforced with a passion of self-forgetful zeal never surpassed by former evangelists.

Hugh Price Hughes was a man of his time, always alive to new movements of thought, open-eyed and impressionable and by no means traditionalist in opinion. He threw himself into all sorts of social, political, and journalistic activities, but people who failed to realize that he was primarily a Methodist evangelist, with the old message of salvation for sinful men, and that his passion for souls absorbed all others, failed to understand him and his work.

These Methodist attacks on the paganism of England from 1790 to 1890 were exceptional. Two developed outside Wesleyan Methodism, and one—not without difficulties so far as its leader was concerned—within. All were in strong contrast to the normal Methodism of the day. They were historic rebukes to the torpidity and self-concentration of nineteenth-century Methodism. Methodism became a more or less conventional sect, finding 'our people,' not in highways and hedges, but in her red and green baize pews, and in Methodist nurseries, which were sufficiently well populated to account for her increases. The religious life of the period is well illustrated by the famous *Liverpool Minutes*. Days of decline sent the Conference to its knees, and resolutions were drawn up at the Liverpool Conference of 1820, which are read in substance annually to this day in Wesleyan Synods, stressing the necessity of normal pastoral work. The ministers addressed were pastors of the flock, and their concern was the ninety and nine, not the one. That the

new pastoral effort met with great success does not alter the contrast between early and mediaeval Methodism. The need of the lost sheep tended to be forgotten—or only thought of in foreign climes, where he could be reached vicariously through the missionary-box. Personal quest of the lost became secondary in importance. I know few more striking contrasts than the pious but conventional formulas of the *Liverpool Minutes* with Wesley's *Rules of a Helper*. At District Synods one slumbers through a reading of those nineteenth-century pietisms, to wake up when Wesley's terse, live, individual rules are read, as they always are at the same time. Any one with imagination is transported from a building with green baize pews and a mahogany pulpit to the open air and the heroic age.

I do not mean that the middle nineteenth century had no evangelists. It would ill become one of my name to say so. God raised up men like John Smith, David Stoner, Thomas Collins, Billy Bray, William Carvosso, and others who did great work, but the work was on comparatively conventional lines. It had little of the early Methodist or Primitive Methodist, or even ' Forward Movement,' attack on the outside world. Perhaps the career of evangelism most striking, because longest, was that of John Rattenbury, the writer's grandfather. His ministry stretched from 1828 to 1879. It was contemporary, therefore, with some of Wesley's preachers, and also with preachers still living. His career is a convenient bridge between the twentieth and eighteenth centuries, and it was all the time a ministry of fervent evangelism. A glance through his sermon register, which is in my possession, shows the wonderful response to his appeal. Entries telling of many scores of seekers for salvation at single services are found throughout the whole course to the very end of a remarkable ministry. Methodism in the nineteenth century had no other ministry like it, when both its length and the intensity of evangelistic appeal are considered. But it was conducted in chapels.

It made no deliberate attack on the outside world. And what was true of what was admittedly one of the most successful ministries of Methodism remained generally true until the Forward Movement. I do not mean that there was no normal mission work during the century. Cottage services, and Mission Band activities, were generally carried out, but the work centred round the chapels and not the market-places or village greens, and made little direct attack on heathen England. The Victorian period of Methodism was devout, and produced beautiful characters, but its separation from Anglicanism on the one hand and Nonconformity on the other, its fear of political and social activities, and its failure to carry out its evangelical commission 'on all the world to call,' gave it a rather unpleasant smugness of tone. It needed fresh air. It was not till the powerful voice of Hugh Price Hughes awakened it from slumber that it began to escape a spirit of exclusiveness which tended to the infertility of ideas typical of inbreeding.

There are considerations in the history of Methodism that qualify the censure one might make on the neglect of evangelism by nineteenth-century Methodists. John Wesley left behind him a *contingent* Society. Methodism was not organized by him as an independent Church, though she was so organized that independence was possible. But she only slowly arrived, with many struggles within, at full Church consciousness, or real independence. Her ordered ministry and sacraments were not won without conflict and losses. She was compelled by stern necessity to think about herself, and so her propaganda was crippled during her inner development and period of constitutional struggle, when she was so torn and wounded by separations. And the smaller bodies which separated, holding the common Methodist tradition, also had to consolidate rather than attack the outside world.

But what is most important for our inquiry is whether her regression from evangelical activity was due to

changed doctrine and experience, or merely to such causes as have been named. Was she affected by the intellectual life of the century? Darwin and Karl Marx formulated revolutionary theories, and German Higher Criticism was destroying the traditional conceptions of the Bible. For one hundred years after Wesley's death, Methodism hardly felt the influence of these world-shaking movements. Even the Methodist ministry was not greatly disturbed. In the eighteen-nineties a little German criticism of the Old Testament was discussed and contemptuously dismissed in the theological colleges, and that was all. The name of Karl Marx had hardly been heard in Methodist circles, and Gladstone's godliness was a sufficient answer for most people to Darwin's and Huxley's scepticisms. The theory of evolution, except in very restricted circles, made no profound impression on Methodism; nor were masses of English people generally moved by these theories. Towards the end of the nineteenth century there was no serious change in the venue of Methodism, of intellectual atmosphere, nor of doctrinal teaching and belief from that of the time of Wesley.

There was no doubt some modification of the doctrine of hell. Wesley's literalism was repudiated by Hugh Price Hughes. And material fire, though still in the 'nineties argued for by at least one theological professor, was regarded by most people as a symbol. But Judgement to Come and the unspeakable and eternal consequences of sin, and of the rejection of evangelical salvation in this life, were the common stock of all evangelists. It is difficult to know how far and with what literalism hell was believed in and preached. An interesting evidence of reaction from the crude doctrine of Wesley's one sermon on the subject (fortunately not a Standard Sermon) is the fact that John Rattenbury, whose dramatic preaching of judgement under the metaphor of the Flood made his congregations literally shriek from fear, has put a pencil note at the bottom of the sermon in his copy of Wesley's works which the writer possesses, 'A horrid sermon.'

This on the part of a mid-nineteenth-century evangelist is indicative of a quite early reaction against the crude materialism of the eighteenth. Wesley himself actually preached little on hell, although some of his preachers did; so much so that at Conference, 1744, the question was asked: '*Q*. Do not some of our assistants preach too much of the wrath and too little of the love of God? *A*. We fear that they have leaned to that extreme.' And at the same Conference: '*Q*. Can an unbeliever challenge anything in God's justice? *A*. Nothing but hell. And this is a point we cannot too much insist on.' Salvation, Wesley says, is 'holiness of heart and life,' and Hugh Price Hughes was at one with him. But both preached the judgement to come.

The Forward Movement was the last great attack made on pagan England by Methodism. The importance of it is hardly yet realized, nor its indirect as well as its direct results. Out of it have come the Central Halls at the heart of our great centres of population. No direct appeal within the churches to the masses of the people has been more successful. The early chapters of the history of this movement, and of many of the Central Halls, might be a supplement to the Acts of the Apostles. The evangelical message was joined to greater social service, but the great triumphs of the grace of God in the renewed lives of disreputable people are the evidences of Christianity which make Christianity evident to many living men who have witnessed them. The movement has not exhausted itself, but its heroic days are in the past. The Halls have become the homes of fixed churches, and normal Church life tends to hamper active evangelism. The success of most of the Central Halls is still a gratifying fact, but it is not that of the earlier period. The variety of evangelical attack, and the vigour and enthusiasm with which it is made, are less startling. The cinema takes the place of the brass band when everything else fails, but the inquiry room is less in evidence. The appeals for immediate decisions for Christ are not universal, as

they used to be, and there is less faith in direct evangelistic appeals. A splendid social work is carried on in some of the centres, but, while the evangelical note is still heard, the response is not so frequently seen. The miraculous conversion is much rarer. Speaking both as a post-war and pre-war evangelist, I have little doubt that we have entered into a new spiritual climate, and that in the last twenty years, and especially in the last ten, the effect of new intellectual theory (particularly psychological) has influenced both the preacher and the hearer even in the strongholds of evangelism.

III. The World War brought to light, and itself intensified, a new situation. The remarkable book, *The Army and Religion*, although much criticized, gave a true picture, in my opinion, of the irreligion and religious ignorance of the modern working classes. Many of the men from whom evangelical religion had received only a notional assent found their faith in a loving God stagger and fall in that great cataclysm. There is undoubtedly a widespread indifference to-day to evangelical religion. The old beliefs, common to evangelists and people, about hell, heaven, and judgement do not exist. The people have little fear of God, and hell has no terrors for them. The sense of sin is less acute, and, although there is a vague belief in a Heavenly Father, and a general admiration of Jesus as a hero and friend of the people, there is little sense of a living Christ who died to save men from their sins. The feeling of grievance is greater than the sense of sin. Many men feel themselves victims of social, and not violators of divine law. The heaven they seek for is not of the other world, but is a secular city in this world for the next generation. In a word, the opinions, sentiments, and enthusiasms of the people have changed more in the last two decades than in the sixteen which preceded them. Halévy, in his great *History of England*, points out that the fourth decade of the eighteenth century was a period of social revolt and discontentment in England, but 'in 1739 the revolt assumed a different

form. The discontented workmen flocked to the sermons of three clergymen and their disciples. The popular ferment took the shape of an outburst of enthusiastic Christianity.[1] Whether this could happen again with the same message, having regard to the changed mentality of the people, is our modern problem.

Now, no evangelistic campaign has ever been successful, nor is ever likely to be :

1. Unless it declares a dogmatic message—a gospel ; i.e. genuine good news or, in a secondary degree, a prophetic doom which convinces, like that of A.D. *circa* 1000.

2. Unless it declares its gospel as experienced, and witnessed by its experients.

3. Unless it is declared by men who stake their lives and comfort on its truth.

4. Unless it is declared in language and thought-forms intelligible to the people.

These four facts are, I think, unquestionable. Methodism in all its great evangelical successes has never lacked them. Furthermore, the most celebrated Revivals of Christianity have preached what would to-day be called a Pauline gospel. The description is really a misnomer. The evangelical gospel is the gospel of the Christ who died for our sins and lives again to be our Saviour. That, of course, was Paul's gospel, but it is the only dynamic gospel, and he who preaches another is anathema, and anything less tends to some form of Unitarianism, which, however attractive to groups of educated or semi-educated people, is impotent. The acid-test of a gospel is its power or powerlessness with the crude sinner. Something more dynamic than mild Jesuanity is imperative.

But that leads us to the consideration of the vital question of our message. Do we still possess an evangel intelligible to the people ?

Now there is one thing more important than evangelism, and that is truth. However much we see the importance to the nation and the Church of a great evangelistic

[1] Halévy, *History of England*, vol. i., p. 341.

campaign, we must not deceive ourselves. No man is more certainly damned than the man who declares a gospel he doesn't believe for the sake of results. Adultery and drunkenness are trifling irregularities compared with so great an hypocrisy, and, in the long run, will do less harm both to Church and preacher. Methodist Union will almost certainly be here soon. A great evangelical attack on the nation is the only thing which can secure its certain success. But that attack ought not to be undertaken merely for the sake of Union, and cannot be undertaken unless the men who make it are moved by the truth of their message. It is better that Methodism should perish than that Methodists should lie.

Now can we declare with power the dynamic evangel of Paul, Augustine, Luther, Bunyan, and Wesley in our days? Do we believe that Christ died to redeem men from their sins, and that He lives and is accessible and ready to save them now? I have seen too much of the power of the gospel in the lives of degenerates to disbelieve, and I am convinced that the new psychology entirely fails to explain away God on its own hypothesis of 'the unconscious self' in the people of whom I am thinking, and in personal religious experiences of my own. Karl Marx and German criticism do not alter the facts of religious experience. The new psychology, I admit, might, if it were accepted, but its challenge is not unanswerable. But I should have no faith in the evangelical message if I did not believe in the judgements of God against sin, and in the need of salvation. You cannot preach salvation unless it is from something into something.

What disturbs one to-day is the uneasy feeling that even the Church believes these things very faintly, and those outside her hardly at all. Some changes, no doubt, have occurred which are gains and not losses. Does any intelligent living man believe in the hell preached by Jonathan Edwards or in Wesley's one sermon on the subject? Even the Fundamentalist hedges when you

challenge him. But that is not important so long as the real values of judgement are retained. But how many of us really believe that it makes much difference in the light of eternity whether a man becomes a Christian *now* or not? How many preachers think that eternal destiny hangs upon the acceptance or rejection of their message? How often do we preach in such a way as to feel that people have missed something that really mattered when they did not hear us? How deeply do we feel that those who are indifferent to Christianity are lost sheep who must be sought until we find them? How far are we gripped by the notions fundamental to effective evangelism of God's judgements, men's sins, and men's need of salvation? What power is there in our gospel to drive us to speak to men as Wesley, Bourne, Clowes, William Booth, and Hugh Price Hughes spoke to them? We must answer these questions if we are to undertake a serious evangelical invasion of England. I stand abashed and ashamed as I ask myself these questions.

Of what use would most of our modern preaching and discussion be in a real attempt to win England for Christ? We have difficulties about the traditional doctrines of Scripture, the substitutionary theory of the Atonement, the birth and resurrection of Christ, the validity of Paul's experience and teaching, and we give this qualification or that to the teaching in which we have been trained, but do we present an alternative, intelligible, dogmatic gospel, which has in it the power of God to salvation? We shall be faced in a short time with the most critical situation that has ever confronted Methodism, and one of the greatest opportunities. We live in a country hungry for an authentic message from God. We shall come together and laud the Methodist tradition, and call to mind her glowing primitive experiences; but can we mediate them to the country, or are we to utter a series of evangelical platitudes without conviction and without experience, or a mere catalogue of negative qualifications, questions, and doubts, which may interest the convinced, but are

powerless to hurt the Devil or do anything else but make him smile? And our very existence as a Church is difficult to justify unless we have some vital and dynamic witness to give.

If we go forth with our traditional evangelical message, have we any hope of the England of to-day, with her changed mentality and her dangerous scraps of badly digested knowledge, accepting what we say? The doubts of the pulpit, and the declaration of so much sub-Christianity from the same quarter, have filtered down into the mind of the people, and created a climate unfavourable to evangelical appeal.

There is no hope for evangelism in Modernism. It hasn't produced a dynamic gospel. It lives too much in a conceptual world, and is concerned too much with secondary matters of the study to grip the real man who faces real sins. It mistakes thought for life, the secondary for the primary. A Modernist lady once told me that her difficulty with rescue work was that no well-informed person could tell prostitutes to trust Jesus, who had died to save them from their sins. She said if she could do that she could succeed, as she knew old-fashioned people had succeeded, but such teaching was now impossible. That is it—no message for the real sinner! One would have thought that the fact of such lives redeemed by trusting in Christ's atoning love, had enough of truth behind them to make her doubt doubt! The religion of college quadrangles (and the questions and doubts of them are real enough) may give a motive for service to people who are rooted in traditional Christianity, but it fails in contact with the great tragedies of human sin and vice.

There is little hope in Fundamentalism. Not that its protest on behalf of the faith once delivered to the saints is useless, but that a system which closes all doors to the new world, and judges, with deliberate restriction of knowledge, the world in which we live, makes itself impotent for attack. The Modernist may be the victim

of adventurous curiosity, but the Fundamentalist is the victim of fear of the truth.

But what is equally vital with the message is the experience which makes it alive. From the point of view of evangelism the two are in some ways inseparable, but the experience is the vital spark. If a body of the most incontrovertible truths could be drawn up by the most infallible of committees and read out to the British public, it would be as ineffective as the recital of the Athanasian Creed. Religious truth can only be communicated when it is set on fire by conviction and experience, by experients. History teaches this, but theologians often forget or ignore it. Evangelism is not the communication of concepts but the personal transmission of truths that are alive ; it is really the communication of life. The story of Wesley is one of the best of many illustrations of this. He preached salvation by faith in London churches, and nothing happened except that he was forbidden to preach in them a second time, until his heart was set afire, and then he still roused opponents, but he set other hearts aflame, so that the fire spread.

' Preach faith till you have it,' said Böhler. Now, that did not mean preach a doctrine that you do not believe until you believe it. A man to whom religion is merely conceptual would naturally say it did. Wesley believed in the doctrine—he had been reasoned out of his disbelief in it by Böhler, both by examination of relevant scriptures and of living witnesses—but he hadn't faith. He was intellectually convinced but not vitally quickened, and he was impotent till the fire of heaven descended upon him—as impotent as the devout disciples were in the study circle or fellowship of the upper room before the day of Pentecost.

There is no more important lesson for our age. A man to-day must examine the truth. He must be fair in his examination of traditional truth as well as modernist suggestion. But the truths behind spiritual experience can never bite and inflame till they are more than

concepts; they must be practised till they become 'more than conquerors.' Some truths to be proved must be at least accepted as working hypotheses.

Evangelism can only be effective as it is ministered by an experient; but, to be an experient, action is necessary as well as reflection. It needs no argument to show that Jesus has proved Himself right a thousand times in regarding His Kingdom as won by the witness of the men empowered by experience. There is no other way.

And this largely includes my third essential—that men must stake their lives on the truth they have to declare. Valid witness proves itself to the men evangelized by the sacrificial spirit behind it. Hugh Price Hughes died at fifty-five, a strong man worn out by service. I was present at the Mechanics Hall, Nottingham, when General Booth received the freedom of his native city. One illuminating sentence of his speech remains in my memory: 'The doctors gave me up, so I gave up the doctors.' John Wesley, tireless when nearly ninety, still preached the gospel in the open air. Read Ritson's *Romance of Primitive Methodism* for further evidence. There is no accounting for this except:

> The love of Christ doth me constrain
> To seek the wandering souls of men;
> With cries, entreaties, tears, to save,
> To snatch them from the gaping grave.

But can this appeal to the men of our day, with their changed mentality? To some great extent it can. The changed mentality is a fact, but the changed mentality of the preacher is also a fact; but, given the conviction, witness and sacrifice will always tell their tale. But it could not obtain all the success of earlier evangelists unless the form of the message, or its emphasis, was differently expressed. In my opinion, the greatest need of to-day is some teaching of judgement, or the spiritual equivalent of hell, which will make men realize the deeper meaning of their uneasy consciences and their unrealized

hunger after the unseen. The bait of secular improvement is luring them from eternal things. But sooner or later they will, as all other men, find that the goal vanishes when the immediate objective is reached. I feel, however, that it is here that the principal difficulty of modern evangelism lies, nor do I see a solution for it. At the moment it is unlikely that much approach can be made to heathen England by the preaching of judgement to come. Social righteousness to come shows a more likely path.

But we are not without our *points d'appui*. The general belief that God is good and kind is one. It may be that on that basis people will see that God would not even be good and kind unless He were just—and justice implies judgement. Perhaps we might get back in that way to the Cross of Christ, which means both judgement and love, as the chief evidence, as the Wesley hymns declare, of the goodness of God. But we have another approach in the common admiration of Jesus. It is true that the Jesus honoured by the people is more of a Socialist than a Saviour, but He still remains their hero. If we can begin with Jesus the teacher and hero we are on the way to Jesus the crucified Saviour, who did not only die, but who lives to save.

But there is one other thing. The salvation that Wesley taught was 'holiness of heart and life,' including 'love to the neighbour.' Wesley insisted that a man's social obligations were part of his salvation. But too often the social implications of this truth have been implicit rather than explicit in Methodism. Here is the great opportunity of the new evangelism. Not with a piping voice, but with the sound of a trumpet, we must preach the whole gospel of personal salvation and social service, and, whatever it means, have no fear of giving actual expression to love of the neighbour. It is imperative that social service should not be substituted for evangelical religion, as it sometimes has been, but be shown to be one of its integral characteristics. We

cannot teach that the unfortunate are merely victims of society, but nevertheless the gospel of salvation must be preached not only as a gospel of personal redemption, but also of social reconstruction, if we are to reach this age, and if, indeed, we are to preach the whole gospel of the New Testament.

Can it be done? It can if we have religion enough, and in no other way. It is futile to talk about changed conditions and changed climate and new ideas, as if they were reasons why we should do nothing; they are reasons why we should do the more. The people are hungry for God and truth, and genuinely experienced religion, preached with experience and sacrifice, will reach them. The one question that matters is whether or no we have enough religion. I believe in the temper of our times it is desirable that evangelists shall be widely informed men—not experts merely in textual criticism, but men who are aware of the life and thought of their day. The intellectual challenges of the day will increasingly mar their effectiveness if they cannot face them, but that sort of knowledge will not suffice of itself. Butler convinced the intellect of his age, but Wesley got the people converted. It is the new Wesley we want, the man who thinks and reads and is—most important of all—set afire. The latter is the vital thing, and can even be operative without the former. I have seen intellectual agnostics converted through the witness of illiterate men, and the experience is the one vital thing, but that is not to say that knowledge doesn't matter; quite the contrary. A ministry in modern days too lazy or ignorant to face the intellectual questions of the time will fail in experience as well as knowledge. God is not likely to reveal Himself to persons who are so obviously in need of repentance.

But the greatest difficulty for evangelism sometimes is the Church herself. Methodism has in past times proved herself too small to retain evangelical firebrands who set the country alight. A gospel with a fearless social application, and with the fire of evangelism in its bosom,

may sift the Church and reveal what is hay and wood and stubble. Ecclesiastical organizers will do what they can to postpone days of judgement, but their power is greatest in Churches that are half alive. It is better that the organized Churches should perish if they cannot save England from paganism and paganization. Methodist Union will be a testing-time. The early years of the New Methodism will largely decide its future. Are we to settle down into a conventional body of religious nonentities, or shall we awaken the echoes of our mighty past? A great evangelistic attack on England of the type I suggest might shake the stability of the Methodist organization. Well, if so, the name Primitive might rise again. But one thing I am assured of, and that is: the only Methodism which is worth preserving is the Methodism of evangelical assault on the strongholds of Satan. May forces be liberated to shake them to their foundations!

And now shall I tear this up? Who am I to preach what I don't practise? For that great possible future I am not good enough nor young enough. No, I won't tear it up. For perchance I may be a voice crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord.'

IX

METHODISM AND MODERN SOCIETY

By E. C. Urwin, M.A., B.D.

The Methodist movement of the eighteenth century needs to be set over against a background of far-reaching political, social, and economic changes. Some of these had a world-wide range. It was the age of the French and Spanish wars, and the clash of arms reverberated in places as far asunder as Canada, the backwoods of America, and the plains of India. Partial compensation for the loss of the American Colonies was afforded by the peaceful voyages and discoveries of Captain Cook, which gave Great Britain its first hold upon the island continent of Australia; and the issue of a brief, sharp struggle with Holland towards the end of the century brought her the dubious possession of South Africa. These events gave to the English race a hold upon the greater part of the undeveloped portions of the globe. 'England ceased to be a Power whose position was determined by its place in a single continent; henceforth her destinies lay beyond the oceans.' This expansion of Empire has been held to be amongst the favouring conditions which gave the Methodist Revival its world-wide opportunity, for without it Methodism might have been little more than another English Nonconformist sect. It became, instead, almost the dominant faith of two continents.

Equally, the latter half of the century resounded with the call of provocative and revolutionary social ideals. Liberty and equality were the watchwords of the American War of Independence, and became the torches that kindled the fierce flames of passion that lit up the French

Revolution. The continued perpetration of the wrong of slavery and the horrors of the slave trade became living issues of the day and hour. Everywhere the voice of liberty was challenging the citadels of privilege, and extending its claims to every relation of life, religious, civic, and economic. The old social structure began to crack and crumble in every joint and corner, and new conditions demanded new adjustments at every turn.

Finally, the closing years of the eighteenth century saw the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution. In 1791, the very year of John Wesley's death, came John Horrocks, of Bolton, to Preston, in Lancashire, and set up new machinery for the spinning and weaving of cotton. The fact was symptomatic and prophetic. When Wesley was born, England was predominantly an agricultural community. Yet nearly half the country-side was still a waste of forest, moor, bog, and fen, and the population outside London was concentrated in those counties where the soil was most fertile. Worcestershire, it is remarked, was more densely peopled than Lancashire or Yorkshire. But towards the end of Wesley's lifetime all this was rapidly being changed. England became the workshop of the world, a new phenomenon in the social history of our race—the first industrialized State. The social consequences of this were stupendous; so vast, in fact, that it is not surprising men were overwhelmed by them, or failed deplorably at first to subdue them to high social ends. Unexpected means of wealth were suddenly placed within their eager grasp, and the opportunities for the exploitation of human life and labour were well-nigh unrestrained. 'The result was a revolution in which the older England . . . passed away for ever. A new England was born, at first misshapen, unconscious of herself and of her past; nor were there absent the usual pangs and pains of an unexpected birth.'

This is not the place to describe in detail the social misery with which the Industrial Revolution in its first incidence overwhelmed the people of England, a misery

only aggravated by the evil after-effects of the many wars of the century. The rapid growth of the factory system induced a flow of population to the industrial regions of the North, gravitating around places like Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Sheffield, Leeds, Bradford, and Newcastle. This shifting of the population to the towns was facilitated by the fateful Enclosure Acts, which, whatever their results for the improvement of agriculture, had at least the demerit of depriving the agricultural labourer of a direct and personal interest in the land. We see in the place of the old England, poverty-stricken as it was, and for the most part rural in character and pursuits, a new England of long mean streets and crowded dwellings, with an artisan population working long hours in factory or mine, into which children of both sexes were introduced at an early age, with but poor remuneration, at a time when food was scarce and dear. The result was inevitable. It was to produce a crop of social problems, to the solution of which more than a century of thought and labour has barely brought us in sight. The thing came suddenly, almost torrentially, a swift episode of change with which neither statesmen, nor moralists, nor economists were able at first to cope. It released mechanical powers and human energies which could not easily be restrained or directed. In place of the ploughshare and the sickle was heard the rattling noise of shuttle and the clatter of whirring wheels. For the direction of these new powers and energies at first only rough ' rules of thumb ' were available, reduced later to the dignity of a science called economics. But the economic science which sought to explain the principles on which human industry produced wealth has been conspicuously incapable of giving moral direction, where moral direction was imperative. Where economics failed and statesmanship was sluggish and torpid, could religion succeed? What, in short, was the reaction of the Evangelical Revival to the welter of political, social, and economic change which the eighteenth century ushered in?

Two opposing tendencies reveal themselves in the answers that are usually given to this question. On the one hand, there is the tendency of those concerned for the honour of religion to over-estimate the influence of the Methodist Revival upon the political, social, and economic problems which the eighteenth century in general, and the Industrial Revolution in particular, precipitated upon the English people, and to minimize or overlook its failures and neglects. Methodist historians are not altogether above suspicion of sometimes yielding to this tendency. The bias is not unnatural. On the other hand, we have criticism from the ethical side, of the type made by the late Dr. Dale, that ' one defect of what we call the Evangelical Revival consists in its failure to afford to those whom it has restored to God a lofty ideal of practical righteousness and a healthy, vigorous moral training.' Alongside this there is the tendency exhibited by historians with strong political bias, or with a predominant interest in social reform rather than religion, to undervalue the social influence of the Methodist Revival, to accuse it of ignoring or being indifferent to social wrong, and of diverting moral energy from the concerns of this life to the task of assuring oneself of a place in the next, and, on the whole, of being a hindrance rather than a help in the cause of social progress, 'a cross current ' rather than a favouring stream.

The discussion of the present chapter will take a different course. It will contend and endeavour to show that ' the Methodist witness ' to the truth of Christianity involved social principles of a far-reaching kind, whose application to the problems of the day was very imperfectly grasped, and was complicated by inhibitions that were the legacy of an older day ; but it will also endeavour to show that the working out of these principles has been the task of the intervening century, and that only with the dawn of the twentieth century are there indications that these Christian principles of social order, now clearly grasped, are rallying to their allegiance the united forces

of evangelical religion. In short, as at some earlier stages in Christian history, so in the eighteenth century, Christian leaders were no more ready or no less ready for the task of supervising the deep, seething forces of social change than were the statesmen, the moralists, and the economists. The thing in some sense took them unawares, and it has taken more than a century of laborious thinking and effort to grasp all the issues that are at stake, to clear the air, and in the light of experience, often painful and sometimes attended with shame, to indicate the true lines of Christian social effort. At least three stages may be detected in the working out of the social implications of the Methodist Revival and the awakening of a strong social conscience within her borders, and not hers alone, but of the whole of the evangelical Churches of this country. There was first a period when the social implications of the Methodist witness were imperfectly apprehended, and their influence inhibited by strains of an innate conservatism ; a period when social effort was left to the inspired individual. There was next a period when a deepening sense of corporate responsibility, kindled in the hearts of a few prophetic souls, began to stir and direct the effort of the whole Church. There is finally the period culminating in the last five years, when Methodism has been called to join, with other great Protestant and evangelical communions of this and other lands, in a united effort to enunciate the Christian principles of a Christian social order, and to work conjointly for its achievement.

I. 'The experimental doctrines of the Evangelical Revival which stand out prominently,' it has been recently said once more,[1] 'are three in number: God's unqualified love for all mankind, the witness of the Spirit, and Perfect Love.' While the sphere in which they were first and most characteristically applied was that of the interior relations of the individual soul with God, certain very definite ethical results inevitably followed, in which there lay very great potentialities for the inspiration and

[1] Rattenbury: *Wesley's Legacy to the World*, chap. ix., p. 92.

direction of social effort. The glowing affirmation that 'Christ died for all men' or the proclamation of 'free grace' was bound inevitably to heighten men's sense of the value of the individual to God, or, in modern phrase, to awaken regard for 'the sacredness of personality.' A new valuation of human life was the natural corollary, with a new solicitude for men, born of the conviction that every man was worth saving. The new solicitude might exhibit itself primarily in a care for men's souls, in which, after all, salvation must begin; but it was none the less a token of a new and Christian regard for the value of human life. 'The witness of the Spirit,' by which the experience of divine forgiveness was assured to the seeking soul, might, by the very gratitude it evoked, serve to inspire the new solicitude for men, which the gospel call proclaimed.

O let Thy love my heart constrain!
Thy love for every sinner free,
That every fallen soul of man
May taste the grace that found out me;
That all mankind with me may prove
Thy sovereign everlasting love.

But in some ways the most significant social factor in the Methodist witness was the doctrine of Christian perfection: perfect love. Here, at any rate, an ethical ideal was exhibited not unattainable even in this life, and, as John Wesley conceived it, practical to the core. 'Loving God,' he writes in old age, 'with all our heart and our neighbour as ourselves, is the perfection I have taught these forty years.'

The glowing inspiration that lay behind it he expresses in another place, when he thus describes the ethical aim of the preaching of himself and John Nelson.[1] 'God loves you, therefore love and obey Him. Christ died for you, therefore die to sin. Christ is risen, therefore rise in the image of God. Christ liveth for evermore, therefore live to God till you live with Him in glory! So we

[1] *New History of Methodism*, vol. i., p. 212.

preached.' During all those years he had, he tells us,[1] 'one point of view—to promote, as far as I am able, vital practical religion, and by the grace of God to beget, preserve, and increase the life of God in the souls of men.'

To estimate the moral and social fruit of the Methodist Revival, we look first to the regenerated life of its converts. We may recall Wesley's own description of the results of the flaming evangelism which swept over England under the preaching of Whitefield, his brother and himself. 'The drunkard commenced to live sober and temperate; the whoremonger abstained from adultery and fornication; the unjust from oppression and wrong. He that had been accustomed to curse and swear for many years now swore no more. The sluggard to work with his hands that he might earn his own bread. The miser learned to deal his bread to the hungry and to cover the naked with a garment. Indeed, the whole of their life was changed.' Here the Methodist societies begin to take on a social significance. They were intended to be nothing less than 'schools of holiness,' in which men and women definitely united in fellowship to seek Christian perfection. Methodism, that is, was as essentially moral as a religious movement. Out of the new religious passion was to come forth the pure life of radiant but disciplined love to God and man, and no one has rightly envisaged Methodism who does not discern that ethical ideal to be the highest reach of its spiritual aspiration.

But when we pass beyond the immediate preoccupation of the Methodist Revival with the regeneration of individual men, into the wider arena of political and social life, the result is not so clear and unequivocal. That Wesley himself possessed a living interest in these questions is abundantly evidenced by his many pamphlets. They range over a wide area—from the illegal arrest of John Wilkes, for example, discussed in a long letter to a friend, and the unhappy dispute which provoked the American War of Independence, to 'Thoughts on the

[1] Allen; *Methodism and Modern World Problems*, p. 7.

Present Scarcity of Provisions' and 'Thoughts on Slavery.' From these we may learn that, while Wesley could be moved, and moved profoundly, by human need and hunger, by the ignominies of slavery, and the horrors of war, yet in all matter that touched the prerogatives of Government and the existing order he brought a settled habit of mind against change, or the agitation for change. He says of himself,[1] 'I am no politician; politics lie quite outside my province.' But this mind concerning the England of his day is described from the following: 'We enjoy at this day throughout these Kingdoms such liberty, civil and religious, as no other kingdom or commonwealth in Europe, or in the world, enjoys; and such as our ancestors never enjoyed from the Conquest to the Revolution. Let us be thankful for it to God and the King.'[2] He is a loyalist to the core, and has no sympathy with the political agitators of the times, 'turning quiet, reasonable men into wild bulls, bears, and tigers.'[3] To the evil agency of these 'designing men, the Ahithophels,' he ascribes the troubles in America as well as the unrest at home[4]; and the only licence he will concede to a Christian minister to preach politics is to 'refute vile aspersions' against the monarchy.[5]

At the same time, it is clear that he encouraged, and himself took an active interest in the discharge of the responsibilities of Citizenship. References to the General Elections of the time appear in his *Journal*, and his 'Word to a Freeholder,'[6] written on an occasion during the election of 1747, while his clothes were being dried after a wet journey, was in circulation until 1783. The throb of deep responsibility is there. 'O consider what you do! Act as if the whole election depended on your single vote, and as if the whole Parliament depended

[1] 'Free Thoughts on Public Affairs,' *Works*, vol. xi., p. 14.
[2] 'Thoughts on Liberty,' *Works*, vol. xi., p. 45.
[3] *Idem*, *Works*, vol. xi., p. 43.
[4] 'Calm Address to our American Colonies,' *Works*, vol. xi., p. 88.
[5] 'How far is it the duty of a Christian minister to preach politics?'
[6] 'A Word to a Freeholder,' *Works*, vol. xi., pp. 196–7.

(and therein the whole) on that single person whom you now choose to be a member of it.' But the accent of extreme loyalty is there also. If no candidate exactly fulfils all ideal requirements, ' then vote for him that loves the King, King George, whom the wise providence of God had appointed to reign over us. He ought to be highly esteemed in love, even for his office sake. A King is a lovely sacred name. He is a Minister of God unto thee for good. How much more such a King——.'

But in others of his pamphlets we discern a mind alert to social need and wrong. 'Why are thousands of people starving? ' he asks at the outset of his ' Thoughts on the Present Scarcity of Provisions,' " perishing for want, in every part of the Nation. The fact I know, I have seen it with my eyes, in every corner of the land. I have known those who could only afford to eat a little coarse food once every other day. I have known one in London . . . picking up from a dunghill stinking sprats, and carrying them home for herself and her children. I have known another gathering the bones which the dogs had left in the streets, and making a broth of them, to prolong a wretched life.'[1] We know that it was to alleviate such distress that Wesley devoted much personal philanthropic effort, but here it is interesting to find him invading the sphere of economics, laws, and Government action in the control thereof. ' Thousands of people throughout the land are perishing for want of food. This is owing to various causes; but, above all, to distilling, taxes, and luxury.' Therefore prohibit distilling, ' that bane of health, that destroyer of strength, life, and virtue '; repress luxury, ' whether by laws, by example, or by both '; reduce the price of beef and mutton, ' by increasing the breed of sheep and horned cattle,' and the price of pork and poultry, ' by letting no farms of above an hundred pounds a year.'[2] This last is an interesting comment on the baneful effects of the Enclosure Acts.

[1] ' Thoughts on the Present Scarcity of Provisions,' *Works*, vol. xi., pp. 53–9.
[2] *Idem*, pp. 58–9.

That Wesley could be stirred to deep feeling by the perpetration of inhuman wrong is evidenced also by his well-known attitude to slavery. His 'Thoughts on Slavery,'[1] a booklet of twenty pages, compact of history, argument, passion, and compassion, is a courageous indictment of the inhuman traffic. 'Away with all whips, all chains, all compulsion,' he writes, and turns to prayer: 'O Thou God of love, Thou who art loving to every man, and whose mercy is over all Thy works, Thou who art the Father of the Spirits of all flesh, and who art rich in mercy unto all, Thou who hast mingled of one blood all the nations upon earth, have compassion upon these outcasts of men, who are trodden down as dung upon the earth.' We can understand, therefore, his support of Clarkson and his commendation of Garrettson and Gotch, the American Methodists who voluntarily set free their slaves, while his famous letter to Wilberforce will be remembered to the end of time. 'Unless the divine Power has raised you up to be as Athanasius *contra mundum*, I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise, in opposing that execrable villainy, which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils; but *if God be for you, who can be against you?* . . . Go on, in the name of God, and in the power of His might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish before it.'

A final indication of the nature of Wesley's own political and social opinions, of importance in the light of modern concern, is his attitude to war. That he was sensible to its horrors is clear from his 'Seasonable Address to the Inhabitants of Great Britain,'[2] and that he was conscious of its folly from his bold letter to Lord North, both written under the shadow of the War of Independence. In the one case he appeals to the sentiment of compassion:

[1] *Works*, vol. xi., pp. 59–79.
[2] 'Seasonable Address,' *Works*, vol. xi., p. 120.

'Then who that has any understanding, any bowels of mercy and compassion, would not do the utmost that either human or divine prudence can suggest to prevent it? For who knows, when the sword is once drawn, where it may stop?' To Lord North he exhibits a divine compulsion to write: 'I think silence in the present case would be a sin against God, against my country, and against my own soul.' Yet his appeal to the statesman is on the lower ground of common sense: 'Waiving all consideration of right and wrong, I ask, Is it common sense to use force towards the Americans?' His point is that a paid militia had no real chance of success against volunteers fighting for freedom. It is plain that Wesley, whatever his sense of the inhumanity of war, had no feeling against the use of armed force as such. His commendation of the courage of Methodist soldiers, and, above all, his twice-repeated offer to the Government to raise troops 'for the King,' first in 1756, and again probably in 1779, show all too clearly that to him war might be, as to Douglas Jerrold, 'a grim necessity.' Lurking behind this attitude we suspect there lay Wesley's reverence for established authority.

If summing up to the point now reached, we ask what kind of action was likely to ensue from this combination of evangelistic solicitude for all men, with deep reverence for established authority, two things are evident. First, it was likely to unloose rich energies of individual philanthropic and humane service. This it did conspicuously in Wesley's own case. The words of Green, the historian, are apposite here: 'The noblest result of the religious revival was the steady attempt, which has never ceased from that day to this, to remedy the guilt, the ignorance, the physical suffering, the social degradation, of the profligate and the poor.' On Wesley's own activities in this field we cannot dilate. The writers of the *New History of Methodism* have succinctly summarized them.[1] 'Wesley anticipated almost all the forms of social

[1] *New History of Methodism*, p. 225.

work now carried on in the town missions of Methodism. Labour homes, schemes of work for the unemployed, poor man's loan offices and banks, medical dispensaries, and stations for the use of the newly discovered electrical apparatus were included in his schemes. The story of his personal charity would fill a volume.' We add only a reference to his interest in education. Though, as the same writer says, in his knowledge of child nature and in educational theories he was not much in advance of the educated Englishman of his day, his interest was deep and genuine, especially in his conviction that it should be for all. So originated the schools at Kingswood, for colliers as well as the sons of his preachers, for the poor around the London Foundery, and the orphans of Newcastle. Green, the historian, says we owe to the spiritual movement led by Wesley, 'the first impulse to our popular education.'[1] Certain it is that the three great popular educational movements—the Sunday School movement, the National School Society, and the British and Foreign School Society—which so influenced the beginnings of national education in this country, date from the closing years of the eighteenth century, and owe their creative impulses to the Evangelical Revival.

This philanthropic and humane concern might step through individual initiative into the region of political action. We have seen that on occasion Wesley did not himself refrain from invading that sphere. But in more conspicuous cases other children of the Evangelical Revival have left a deeper impression on humane legislation. We think of John Howard and Elizabeth Fry, though Wesley anticipated both and set an example in solicitude for the prisoner in his cell. Still more outstanding were the well-known careers of Wilberforce and Shaftesbury, both of whom found the dynamic, the inspiration, and the incentive for political action, the one in behalf of the oppressed and cruelly-wronged slave, the

[1] *New History of Methodism*, pp. 218, 219.

other in the interest of the exploited child and woman worker of our own land, in the first principles of evangelical religion. Benjamin Kidd has averred that 'the two doctrines which contributed most to the abolition of slavery were the doctrine of salvation and the doctrine of equality of all men before the deity.'[1] It would not be difficult to show that they had some bearing on the Factory Acts.

But what we miss in reviewing the social influences that flowed from the Evangelical Revival is any corporate activity on the part of the Methodist people, or, indeed, any other Christian communion in England, with the possible exception of the Society of Friends, at that time in the direction of stimulating social progress. It is even possible that their corporate influence was adverse rather than favourable. Two reasons probably account for this. The first was preoccupation with what was after all their main business—the propagation of personal religion. The second was a conservative prepossession in favour of the established order and a dread of revolutionary change. The violence and ruthlessness that attended the French Revolution left a deep impression upon the minds of Englishmen, and in contrast with politically-minded Nonconformists like Price and popular agitators like Cobbett, religion took the line of checking unrest and staying discontent. This is the gravamen of some recent adverse criticism of the influence of early Methodism on social reform. That this conservative attitude dominated the Methodist Conference in the year that followed Wesley's death, and through the early decades of the nineteenth century is conceded by so staunch a Methodist as Dr. Rattenbury. 'Mr. and Mrs. Hammond[2] agree,' he says, 'with Halévy, in regarding the Methodists of the early nineteenth century as a Conservative force. This is true, no doubt, of the corporate life both of Wesleyan Methodism and of the

[1] Kidd, *Social Evolution*, p. 180.
[2] The Hammonds, *The Town Labourer*, chaps. xi., xiii.

Evangelical Party in the Church of England.'[1] During the long-continued agitations for Parliamentary Reform, Methodists were warned to keep away from Reform meetings. In the distress that followed the Napoleonic Wars, the Wesleyan Methodist Conference of 1819 sent to the Home Office a copy of the following address to the Methodist people: 'We deeply sympathize with those of you, dear Brethren, who, from the pressure of the times and the suspension of an active commerce are, in common with thousands of your countrymen, involved in various and deep afflictions. . . . As many of you to whom this measure of national suffering has been appointed reside in places where attempts are made by "unreasonable and wicked men" to render the privations of the poor the instruments of their own designs against the peace and Government of our beloved county, we are affectionately anxious to guard all of you against being led astray from your civil and religious duties by their dangerous artifices. Remember you are Christians, and are called by your profession to exemplify the power and influence of religion by your patience in suffering and by living peaceably with all men. Remember you belong to a Religious Society which has from the beginning explicitly recognized as high and essential parts of Christian duty to "Fear God and honour the King," to submit to magistrates for conscience' sake, and not to speak evil of dignitaries. You are surrounded with persons to whom these duties are the object of contempt and ridicule; show your regard for them, because they are the doctrines of your Saviour.'[2] But, while the Methodist Conference displayed this Conservative temper, many individuals and groups within Methodism evinced living sympathy with the cause of political and social progress, and in later days their voice was to become living and effective in the high counsels of the Conference itself. 'There must have been many,' concede the Hammonds, 'in the Methodist world who

[1] *Wesley's Legacy*, p. 237.
[2] Quoted by the Hammonds, *The Town Labourer*, p. 180.

were neither enthusiasts nor Conservatives.'[1] Estimating the influence of Methodism on the working class movement, they add: 'By the life and energy and awakening that it brought to this oppressed society it must, in spite of itself, have made many men better citizens, and some even better rebels.'[2] We recall Mr. Sidney Webb's tribute to the Durham miner: 'From the religious revival . . . has come, I believe, a large part, not only of the change of life and of the sobriety and earnestness of conduct, by which so many thousands of Durham families have been transformed, but also no small share of the elevation of character, and the zeal and energy which have brought success to the other social movements of the past half-century. Is it too much to say that it is very largely upon the foundations laid in Durham by the humble "ranters" of 1821–40, and by the efforts of the families which have passed under their influence that in the various parts of the county, Co-operative and Friendly Societies, Trade Unionism and the Labour Party have in the subsequent generations developed?'[3]

II. In the background of the Methodist movement as it was at Wesley's death and in the opening decades of the nineteenth century lay the dark shadows of misery and wretchedness created by the Industrial Revolution and the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars. The next large period in the Methodist history as in national life was ushered in by the Reform Bill of 1832 and ends with the Great War. It was an age when in the body politic there was a rapid growth of democratic sentiment and a steady extension of democratic privilege, marked in the political sphere by an ever-widening franchise. The age was distinguished also for heroic individual service in humane causes. Wilberforce lived to see, not only the slave trade, but slavery itself, abolished within the British Empire; and Shaftesbury devoted forty years of public

[1] Quoted by the Hammonds, *The Town Labourer*, p. 286.
[2] *Idem*, p. 297.
[3] Sidney Webb, *The Story of the Durham Miners*, p. 127.

life to the cause of factory reform and industrial legislation. The body politic was being compelled by the very nature of the case to control for human ends the new force of industrialism. Nor were signs lacking that organized Christian opinion was being led to recognize a new obligation to think out the Christian issues that were involved. Could industry, motived by self-interest, be directed to higher and disinterested ends? Was there any Christian motive that could be supplied? Apart from the strong and effective protests of individual reformers like Lord Shaftesbury, the first attempt to substitute 'the gospel of the Kingdom' for 'the gospel of self-interest' came from the Christian Socialists, among whom Frederick Denison Maurice and Charles Kingsley were chief. The name did not imply any collectivist economic theory; in Maurice's words, 'Any one who recognizes the principle of co-operation as a strong and truer principle than that of competition has a right to the honour or the disgrace of being called a Christian Socialist.' From that point on we can trace a deepening conviction on the part of Christian leaders in every communion that it was the task of the Christian Church corporately to think and enunciate Christian principles for the ordering of political, social, and industrial relations. In the Church of England, impetus in this direction was given by great and distinguished leaders like Westcott and Scott Holland; among the Free Churches the influence of R. W. Dale, and later John Clifford, in the same direction, was far-reaching. Slowly we see the Churches giving their allegiance corporately to the task of temperance reform, considering their relation to a national system of education, and finally confronted with the necessity of making a common witness for peace and a Christian order in industry.

What, in this stream of tendency, was the place and contribution of Methodism? First it is to be noted, merely as a matter of history, that Methodism entered this period under the paralysis of the shock of the painful

disruption which severed for a time the more liberal and the more conservative elements within her. It is but a passing observation that the stress and tension through which Methodism then passed was in part a reflection of the tension in the world without: conservative fears contended with liberal hopes, and were unable to find a *via media* along which both might travel together. The year 1849 was a fateful year in Europe; it was also fateful for British Methodism. The result was to delay a corporate Methodist witness that should truly express the bearing of the religious message of Methodism on the problems of the time.

Notwithstanding this handicap, Methodists did contribute a steady stream of personal agencies which furthered the imperative tasks of the hour. We have referred to the testimony of a discerning observer to the influence of Methodism in equipping the Durham miner to enter into his heritage of democratic freedom. The names of Methodists like Oastler and Sadler, Fielden and Butterworth, occupy an honourable, if conspicuously lowly, place among the helpers of Shaftesbury. Not least moving is the part played by Methodist local preachers in the struggle to improve the lot of the agricultural labourer. The story of the 'Tolpuddle Martyrs,' told so vividly by Mr. Sidney Webb in his *History of Trade Unionism*, is as moving a piece of heroism and sacrifice as any missionary biography. The leader, George Loveless, an agricultural labourer, a native of Tolpuddle, an out-of-the-way Dorsetshire village, was a Methodist local preacher. For forming a friendly society amongst his fellow labourers as a defence against a persistent reduction of wages, he and five others, mostly Methodists, were arrested and tried for 'making a conspiracy.' After a most scandalous trial, they were sentenced to seven years' transportation,' not, in the judges' words, 'for anything you have done, as I can prove you intended to do, but for an example to others.' It needed ceaseless agitation, a petition and speeches in the House of

Commons, to reverse the unjust decision and bring the wronged men home.[1] Methodists, in the person of Joseph Arch and George Edwards, also led a similar fight for an improvement of the conditions of the agricultural labourer in East Anglia.

Further, when Methodism began to recover from the paralysis that had fallen upon her corporate life, it became clear that the soul of evangelism and the springs of humane effort were not dead within her. The compressed pages of the *New History of Methodism* dealing with this period are entitled 'Fifty Years of Aggressive Enterprises.'[2] Conspicuous was the way in which the heart of Methodism was touched and challenged by 'the appeal of the empty chapel and the needy people,' which brought to birth the Forward Movement in the establishment of the great Central Halls of London, Manchester, Liverpool, and elsewhere, where manifold religious and social agencies carry on their far-flung redemptive work. The names of Garrett, Collier, and Hughes are conspicuous for adventure and for courage. Significant of the new spirit of responsibility for social conditions was the slightly different line of approach represented by the Bermondsey Settlement and the Leysian Mission, where an attempt was made to bridge the gulf between the different classes of society, and, in the light of knowledge gained by direct contact with social need, to inspire both service and reform. Nor should mention be forgotten of that exquisite illustration of the individual response of a truly Christian heart to the call of clamant human need, when T. Bowman Stephenson, with the help of a few like-minded friends, gathered a few forsaken waifs into houses and tended their bodies and souls. So began the National Children's Home and Orphanage—a living witness to the reality of the redemptive power of Christian love.

There were two directions, however, in which Methodism

[1] See R. W. Allen, *Methodism and Modern World Problems*, pp. 25–6.
[2] *New History of Methodism*, vol. i., pp. 449 ff.

began to accept direct responsibility for issues which affected, not merely her life as a religious institution, but the life of the whole body politic. One was the sphere of education. The impulse given by Wesley was at first felt more outside Methodism than within it, and it was not until 1838 that an Education Committee was set up, under whose direction and stimulus at least a thousand day schools were in existence by 1870. The question of receiving grants-in-aid from the State proved no easy matter for a committee which had begun by laying it down that 'it is the duty of every section of the Church of Christ to educate their own children in their own way in the best way they are able,' and only solved by accepting grants on condition that there should be no interference with its religious teaching. Still later developments in national education compelled a further revision of this view, and led the Wesleyan Conference to formulate a fuller threefold policy: (1) that a Christian unsectarian school should be available for every family; (2) that increased grants of public money to denominational schools should be conditional on adequate and representative public management; (3) and that no national system of education excluding the Bible from the day schools, or prohibiting religious instruction therefrom by the teachers, will meet the necessity of the country. These principles guided the Wesleyan Methodist Church through the education controversy of 1902; and, 'while it is possible that the Wesleyan Conference might be persuaded under new circumstances to modify one of the clauses,' say the writers of the *New History of Methodism*, 'it is evident that Methodism is fully committed to the principles of elective popular control and of the permeation of the educative process by religion.'[1]

[1] For the information on which the paragraph on education is based the writer is indebted to the *New History of Methodism*, vol. i., p. 470, and R. W. Allen, *Methodism and Modern World Problems*, chap. v. Space prevents any adequate mention of the Methodist contribution to the training of teachers or the foundation of public schools.

The second issue on which action was taken which eventually led Methodism into the sphere of legislative effort was that of temperance. It is well known that total abstinence only found acceptance with the Churches as a principle of Christian virtue with very great difficulty. As late as 1867 we find Joseph Livesey, one of the famous 'Seven Men of Preston' who signed the first Total Abstinence Pledge in 1832, stigmatizing the Congregational Union of England and Wales for ignoring in its official gatherings at Manchester the question of temperance, and expressing severe disappointment with the character of a memorial presented by abstaining Methodists to the Wesleyan Conference at Bristol in the same year because it omitted any reference to the 'importance of personal and practical abstinence.'[1] Indicative of the early attitude of Methodism to total abstinence are resolutions of the Wesleyan Conference of 1841, which forbade the use of unfermented wine in the administration of the Sacrament, prohibited the loan of Wesleyan chapels for meetings of the Temperance Society, and put a veto on any preacher going into another circuit to advocate teetotalism without the consent of the superintendent of the circuit.[2]

But the temperance movement continued to make headway and to present a strong and valid claim for recognition and endorsement by the collective conscience of the Churches, to which Methodism could not be deaf. The matter was seriously taken in hand for the first time at the Conference of 1873, when, in response to suggestions from several Synods, a committee was appointed to promote certain contemplated legislation, 'to inquire into the question of intemperance . . . and to consider by what means, in consistency with the unity and harmonious working of our connexional system as to its discipline and worship, the influence of Methodism may be most effectually employed for the remedy of this wide-

[1] Joseph Livesey, The *Staunch Teetotaller*, November 1867.
[2] R. W. Allen, *Methodism and Modern World Problems*, chap. vii., p. 107.

spread and demoralizing evil.'[1] The result of the inquiry was a decision to concentrate the influence of Wesleyan Methodism against so great an evil, but upon a dual basis —one which would admit of the hearty co-operation of all persons, whether they be abstainers or non-abstainers. Such was the basis on which temperance work in Wesleyan Methodism proceeded under a Temperance Committee until 1890, when a minister was set apart for the work, with the result that in 1892 it was realized that a dual basis for dealing with such an evil as intemperance is unsatisfactory, and authority was given for the formation of Total Abstinence Societies. Since then there has been a steady penetration of Wesleyan Methodism with total abstinence principles, until, in 1924, the Conference appealed to 'All Methodists at home and abroad to abstain habitually from the use of intoxicating liquors as beverages, and to keep themselves free from complicity with a traffic . . . so injurious.'

Most significant, however, have been the more recent developments in the activities of the Temperance Committee. In 1911, Henry Carter was elected to the succession in which Armstrong Bennetts and J. Alfred Sharp had preceded him. 'His work was concerned with temperance alone—and with nothing else. But he soon made it clear that this task was closely related to other great social causes. The housing problem cannot be separated from the problem of intemperance. . . . We have realized slowly, but surely, that long hours of labour, bad conditions of toil, and bad housing conditions, are all linked with the problem of intemperance. In a final analysis it was impossible to isolate temperance and to deal with it alone. So in the year 1918 our Temperance Department took to itself a new name: "The Temperance and Social Welfare Department,"; and the scope of its work became that of the whole social conditions of the life of our people. The problems of peace and war, hours and wages, housing and unemployment,

[1] *New History of Methodism*, vol. i., p. 465.

intemperance and gambling, Sunday observance, are all within its compass.'[1] At last a great branch of the Christian Church like Methodism was facing the whole problem of society from a Christian standpoint.

Finally, reference should be made to the interest in temperance and social work of the daughter Churches of Methodism. The United Methodists (Free Methodist section), preoccupied as they were with chapel building, organization, and amalgamation after the fateful disruption of 1849, yet were the first Methodist Church to appoint a separate temperance secretary as far back as 1880. Now, through the Temperance and Social Welfare Committees of its Young People's Department, United Methodism carries on similar activities to those of the Wesleyan Temperance and Social Welfare Committee.

Primitive Methodism, strong in social as in evangelical passion, in 1895 made the pronouncement: 'We recognize social work as a part of Christian endeavour and service,' and the outcome was the magnificent body of social and religious enterprises which centre in the Working Lads' Institute in Whitechapel, the Surrey Chapel, Blackfriars, and at St. George's Hall, Southwark. Both Primitive Methodism and United Methodism have established secondary schools, and Primitive Methodism sustains an orphanage. The resources of these branches of Methodism were too limited to enable them to emulate the mother Church of Methodism in the vast range of her Forward Movement, but these indications are enough to show that the same passion for social amelioration and redemption was stirring in them too.

III. We turn, finally, to contemplate some post-war developments in which Methodism has been called to share, along with other branches of the Christian Church all over the world, all hinging on the problem of a Christian order of society. It is not difficult to see why the Great

[1] 'The Methodist Temperance Pioneers,' article by W. Bardsley Brash in the *Pioneer*, November 1926.

War should have precipitated the problem of Christianity and the social order in a new and sharper form. For, more than any other event ever had done, the Great War raised the problem of the basis of modern civilization, and brought men full tilt against the motives that govern us, from the home to the world state. Moreover it had long been felt that no one branch of the Church was adequate to deal with the problem alone. For a generation, earnest men and women concerned with this problem had been working together in Christian Social Service Unions in all the Churches, and had been wont to confer periodically. A Temperance Council of Christian Churches, in which all branches of Methodism were actively interested, had already been established, and was busily engaged in formulating a common policy of legislative temperance reform. But the issue of the Great War raised the problem of society as a whole, and it was natural, and indeed inevitable, that the call should arise for a combined effort to enunciate the principles of a Christian order of society. So eventuated the great COPEC Conference at Birmingham in April 1924: the first of a remarkable series of Church councils wellnigh ecumenical in character—Birmingham, Stockholm, Lausanne, and Jerusalem—which have made the last five years perhaps the most momentous since the Reformation.

The COPEC Conference was prepared for by over seven long years of persistent prayer and patient thinking. By a series of careful reports, prepared by expert commissions of inquiry, on which many Methodists served with their fellow Christians, the whole bearing of the gospel on society was explored, from the affirmations of the Christian faith on the nature and purpose of God to the problems of home life, industry, the State and international relations. This stirring of the conscience of English Christianity kindled kindred impulses in America and on the Continent, so that the concern was ventilated on the international plane at the Life and Work Conference at Stockholm the following year. When, two years later, in 1927, the Faith

and Order Conference met at Lausanne, although unanimity was not reached on other issues, it could wholeheartedly agree to affirm of the Christian gospel, not only that it ' is the prophetic call to sinful men to turn to God,' but ' the sure source of power for social redemption.' Then at Easter, 1928, the Jerusalem Missionary Conference uttered its resounding call to us to remember that the Christian faith is the one sure instrument for averting the peril of a secular civilization which overshadows the world.

What are the principles of a Christian order of society which thus come to light through this repeated testing of the Christian mind and conscience? What, to explain that ill-sounding but significant word ' Copec,' is the basis of a Christian Order in Politics, Economics, and Citizenship? A well-known Christian leader, the Archbishop of York,[1] has summarized them as fourfold: (1) The sacredness of personality. (2) Fellowship as the divine ideal for human life. (3) Service. (4) Sacrifice. It would not be difficult to show that they set forth a gospel, garbed in the language of the twentieth century, strangely akin to that which swept England in the eighteenth. ' The sacredness of personality ' is an inference from the universality of divine grace, by which Christ died for all men. Fellowship, the divine ideal for human life, is the true application of the Methodist doctrine of Christian perfection: perfect love to God and man. Service and sacrifice are but the obligations which the grace of God throws upon every forgiven child of God.

The one distinct difference between the eighteenth and the twentieth century is the clearness with which we now perceive that the application of these principles cannot be confined to the task of individual regeneration or left to individual initiative, but must be courageously applied to every relation of life and be the corporate task of the whole Body of Christ. ' The sacredness of personality '

[1] *Essays and Addresses.*

is a principle that has energized to produce the emancipation of womanhood, direct the relations of the sexes, determine the true conception of the marriage state, inspire the care of children, and to indicate the end which human industry is intended to serve. Fellowship as a divine ideal suggests a norm and type not only for the Church and the home, but for industrial and international relations as well. But the application of the one and the achievement of the other cannot be brought about except by the service and sacrifice of the individual Christian, and by the Corporate witness of the whole Church of Christ. For this reason Methodists may well rejoice and take their part in the recently established Christian Social Council of England, representative of the Anglican and all the Free Churches, which shall function in the whole field of social obligation as the Temperance Council of the Christian Churches does in the special field of temperance reform.[1]

So we come in sight of our task to-day, with a clearer apprehension of the principles which ought to guide us, and some comprehension of the magnitude of our task. We live in a vortex of vast and far-reaching social changes. No one can say that the human society has reached a condition of stable equilibrium. Our mutual relations with one another in nations, societies, and families are changing daily. Forms of government, monarchies, republics, democratic institutions, dictatorships, appear and disappear with almost kaleidoscopic rapidity. Economic relationships, especially the relationships of the various partners of industry, are in constant process of transformation. It is probable that we are in for an era both of political and industrial experiment the world over. Whether we will it or not, we shall be forced to think and re-think our fundamental relations to one another; in other words, to think socially. The possibilities, both of disaster or achievement, are stupendous. 'We are standing at a juncture in history,' says a leading publicist,

[1] *The Christian Social Council: Its History, Constitution, Aims, and Methods.*

'so vast in its import, so measureless in its possibilities, as to call for the awestruck contemplation of every God-fearing man who is worthy the name of thinker.' 'For those who wish above all things for comfort and security,' says another, 'this is not an ideal time. Far from it. Those who are smoothing their beds for sleep would do better to be packing their bag for the journey; the human family has again struck its tents for another march.' In such a day and hour Methodists may well rejoice in the obligation to bring their own peculiar emphasis to the corporate witness of the whole Church of Christ to a humanity seeking the Kingdom of God on earth.

X

METHODISM AND THE WORLD MISSIONARY TASK

By Charles P. Groves, B.A., B.D.

It is a striking saying of Harnack's that Paul 'tore the gospel from its Jewish soil and rooted it in the soil of humanity.'[1] It is a trenchant reminder that a Christian Church which is parochial and self-centred, dwelling upon traditional inheritance rather than delighting in the unfettered delivery of the good news she has once received, is no true custodian of 'the faith once delivered to the saints.' The impending union of the Wesleyan, Primitive, and United Methodist Churches will be a momentous event in British Methodism. But will it be significant as a goal reached, or as the starting-point for a larger service to humanity in the Master's name? With such a question in mind, we propose a consideration, first, of the missionary heritage of Methodism, and then of the background of present-day conditions against which we must envisage our own task.

I. We begin with a man. John Wesley first met him at Taunton on August 13, 1776. 'Here I found a Clergyman,' he writes, 'Dr. Coke, late a Gentleman Commoner of Jesus College in Oxford, who came twenty miles on purpose. I had much conversation with him; and an union then began which I trust shall never end.'[2] Dr. Coke, soon a Methodist preacher, longed for more than the Methodist preacher's normal sphere. John Wesley blessed him and sent him forth: 'Brother, go out, and

[1] Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, vol. i., p. 57.
[2] Wesley, *Works* (1872), vol. iv., p. 83.

preach the gospel to all the world.' Dr. Coke's first missionary appeal was made in 1784, under the title, 'A Plan of the Society for the Establishment of Missions among the Heathens.'[1] India from the first was in his thoughts, but the door opened in the West. The year was 1786. He was on the second of his nine voyages across the Atlantic, and it was no more his intention to visit the West Indies than on his first, but 'the friendly adverse winds of heaven,' as he calls them, brought him to Antigua on Christmas Day. He found a Methodist Society in being, and met with an appeal that he could not resist. Six neighbouring islands were explored within two months, and the upshot was that Dr. Coke left in the West Indies the three missionaries he was taking with him to America.

Dr. Coke soon received a call from another colony where Negroes were in need. It was in 1787 that a settlement for freed slaves was made at Sierra Leone, on the West Coast of Africa. Among the immigrants were Negroes recently domiciled in Nova Scotia, some two hundred of whom were Methodists; these wrote to Dr. Coke for helpers. A party sent by him in 1795 failed in its purpose. Dr. Coke now waited to find his man; he discovered him in 1810, and in 1811 George Warren, with three lay teachers, sailed for Sierra Leone; he survived but eight months in that deadly climate. With his party, however, the Wesleyan mission in Western Africa began.

Dr. Coke had found the Atlantic his missionary highway, yet it was the Indian Ocean he still longed to cruise. India and Ceylon, South Africa and Java, were on his heart. In 1813 the opportunity seemed to have come. He joyfully set sail as the leader of a missionary party, but he never reached India. While still at sea, on May 3, 1814, he was found dead in his cabin, and was buried in the Indian Ocean.

[1] Reproduced in full in Findlay and Holdsworth, *History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, vol. ii., pp. 14–16. William Carey's famous missionary proposal was made in 1786.

Six missionaries had sailed with him, and a seventh, by arrangement, went to the Cape of Good Hope—the first Methodist missionary to be so stationed. The six completed the voyage to India and landed at Bombay. Destitute of leadership, they discovered they were not destitute of friends, and in due course found themselves in Ceylon. The language division between Tamil in the north and Sinhalese in the south indicated a demarcation of spheres of labour, and they thereupon divided into two parties, a division recognized in the two Districts of to-day.

The earliest ministry of Methodism to men of another race was given to Negro slaves. In the West Indies, a society based on slavery was the accepted order of the day. The attitude to the missionaries varied from island to island. Some planters welcomed a service rendered to their slaves, while others sensed nothing but incipient social revolution in the very wish to lift the Negro. In 1807 the British slave trade was made illegal. But this was only a statutory prohibition of the traffic ; the status of the slave remained. With the development in England of the campaign to abolish the very institution of slavery itself, persecution of the missionaries became bitter and severe, notably in Jamaica. Eventually the cause of humanity triumphed, and the Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Dominions came into operation on August 1, 1834. Now came the testing-time of the work done by missionaries among the Negroes. There were many who prophesied riot and bloodshed. The admirable conduct reported was at once a credit to the Negro and a vindication of missionary work in the West Indies.[1] It is estimated that there were about one million Negro slaves in the islands at emancipation. Out of a total Methodist membership of 32,000, some 23,000 were slaves ; ' no other Church had so numerous a slave fellowship.' Adherents and hearers numbered many more ; it is estimated that some 100,000 to 150,000

[1] See Eugene Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society* (1899), vol. i., pp. 345–6.

Negro slaves were attached to Methodism in 1834.[1] A great work had been accomplished, but the heavy task had now to begin of training for independence a people nurtured in slavery. Severe set-backs were experienced, from economic causes and from the ever-present moral problem of the Negro Church. To-day the centre of interest has moved to Africa, the Negro's home.

If attention in those early days was concentrated primarily upon the West Indies, West Africa was a close second in the interest it claimed. Cargoes of captured slaves could not be restored to their homelands; they were landed at Sierra Leone. This colony, until the forties, was the centre of missionary activity in West Africa.

In Thomas Birch Freeman there arose a pioneer of the first rank.[2] Direct Methodist contact had been made with the Fantis at Cape Coast Castle, on the Gold Coast, on January 1, 1835. Freeman landed here in 1838, but his heart was soon set upon Ashanti. In 1839 he made his first journey to Kumasi, and had an audience with the King. A call came from farther east along the coast. Some of the freed slaves landed at Sierra Leone had made their way back to their homeland; among these were Egbas and Yorubas, of what is now western Nigeria. Christians among them sent a call for help. Freeman set out, and in December 1842 visited the country of the Egbas. Thus was gained the first foothold by Methodism in Nigeria. This led in turn to Freeman's visit to the ill-famed kingdom of Dahomey in 1843. So by the middle of the century Methodist missionaries were found in the present fields of the Gambia, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, Nigeria, and Dahomey.

Meanwhile, under climatic conditions that presented a sharp contrast to the tropics, the aboriginal tribes of North America were being reached. In 1822 Canadian Methodism set apart its first missionary to the Indians.

[1] Findlay and Holdsworth, op. cit., vol. ii., pp. 317, 321.
[2] See the latest biography based on independent research, by F. Deaville Walker, *Thomas Birch Freeman* (1929).

There soon appeared a gifted pioneer, James Evans, who invented a syllabic script, later applied to the writing of all North American indigenous languages. 'A native youth of ordinary talent, using Evans's syllabary, can learn to read in a few days.'[1] The Hudson Bay Company later encouraged Methodist missionaries to enter their territory. James Evans and three helpers from England were stationed in that northern mission field which was 1,500 miles across. Evans soon died, a worn-out worker.[2] R. T. Rundle left a memory still cherished half a century after among the Indians of the Rocky Mountains.

Dr. Coke's six companions bound with him for the East began their work in Ceylon in the year before Waterloo. The effective entry into South India was made soon after. Among the three men appointed to the northern Tamil-speaking section of Ceylon was one James Lynch, who in 1817 began work in Madras. It was undertaken in the first instance for Englishmen. Negapatam to the south of Madras, and Bangalore to the west, were entered in 1820 and 1821 respectively. Thus within the first four years a foothold was obtained in what are now the three Districts in South India. But progress was slow. The resistant strength of Hinduism was only being measured by degrees. Here was no quick response to the telling of the good news, such as was met by missionaries to the Negro. In 1857, the year of the Indian Mutiny, after forty years of missionary service, the result registered by the Indian membership was disappointingly meagre; among the Kanarese of the Mysore, some 86 members and 210 adherents; among the Tamil population at all centres, 280 members and 1,300 adherents.[3]

With the abolition of the East India Company in 1858, at the close of the Mutiny, and the transference of the government of India to the British Crown, there appeared

[1] Findlay and Holdsworth, op. cit., vol. i., p. 459.
[2] See Egerton Young, *The Apostle of the North: A Memoir of James Evans.* Egerton Young was a later worker in the same field.
[3] E. W. Thompson, *The Call of India* (1912), p. 145.

a new interest in the needs of this fascinating empire. A mere chronological record of advance in the succeeding years provides some idea of Methodist expansion to meet the needs of a new day: Barrakpur, up the Hugli river (1859), Calcutta (1862), Lucknow (1864), Faizabad (1876), Benares (1879)—all footholds for the two Districts in the Ganges basin. The last year, 1879, was also the date of the entry into the Haidarabad Native State, which leads to the story of Mass Movements, and the winning of India's outcastes for the Kingdom of our Lord.[1] Meanwhile, educational agencies in India took on a new significance. The name of Alexander Duff is associated with the policy that would undermine the foundations of Brahmanism by an efficient system of 'Christian education.' The large successes of Christianity in India, however, have not been won in the field of high-caste Hinduism, but among the outcastes, and one of the two distinctive contributions that Christian Missions have made to education in India has been the education of the outcastes, the other being their pioneer work in the education of girls. This ministry to outcastes, so richly expressive of the spirit of the Master, has in turn led to a remarkable response, now being reported, of high-caste Hindus to Christianity.

Methodist missionaries reached the South Seas in the first quarter of the century. It was to Tonga, the largest of the Friendly Islands, that they came, in 1822; this was soon after the first approach to the Maoris of New Zealand. John Thomas, the Worcestershire blacksmith, was the apostle of the island. For nearly a quarter of a century he spent himself for Tonga. He found a people dimly feeling their way in the twilight of animistic belief; he left a Christian nation.

A story that reads like an epic is that of the pioneers in the cannibal islands of Fiji. While the Fijians were acknowledged to possess a number of estimable qualities,

[1] See Colyer Sackett, *Out of the Miry Clay*, the story of the Haidarabad mission to the outcastes.

yet these were combined with a savage ferocity which found expression in the easy taking of human life, not only for ritual purposes, but to satisfy the sheer cannibal appetite which they had developed. 'In many places the man-ovens were in continual use; public guests were by custom honoured with a banquet furnished in this way.'[1] The names of Richard Lyth, John Hunt, and James Calvert stand linked as those of pioneers whose unsparing service helped to win the cannibal islands for the Kingdom of our Lord. 'Fiji Wilson' too became a hero in many a Methodist home. When, in 1851, the king who had headed the forces of evil and reaction was publicly baptized, the opposition that had fought long and bitterly was routed; Christ was acknowledged Victor of Fiji. The Methodist Church of Australia now carries responsibility for this work in the Pacific.

It was the middle of the century before the appeal from the Far East was answered. George Piercy, who was the pioneer in China, went out in 1850 on his own account and at his own expense. His offer of service, made from the field, was accepted, and two volunteers, William Beach and Josiah Cox, were sent to join him. It was in Canton that the first foothold was won. This took a full decade.

When the time was ready for advance, the Methodist vanguard went direct to the heart of this mighty empire at Hankow. Josiah Cox went there in 1862; he found Griffith John and his colleague, of the London Missionary Society, who had arrived the year before. A fine example of Christian charity must be recorded here. Josiah Cox, who had previously learned the south China language, had now to learn Mandarin for his work in central China. Griffith John, with splendid generosity, handed over to him as teacher and missionary colleague his own first Chinese convert in Hupeh—Chu Sao Ngan, who became in due course the first ordained Wesleyan minister in China. Three years later, David Hill arrived. The

[1] Findlay and Holdsworth, op. cit., vol. iii., p. 364.

latest historian of Christian missions in China has appraised his work. 'It was to the central China field of the Wesleyan Methodists that there came, in 1865, one of the most prominent and greatly beloved Protestant missionaries of the half-century, David Hill. . . . His unselfishness and singleness of purpose made a profound impression upon both Chinese and Europeans. It was he who won to the faith the devoted Pastor Hsi, and it was the spell of his life that attracted to China the majority of the members of his mission.'[1]

While the Wesleyan Methodists were thus establishing their work in south and central China, the United Methodist Mission, through its several constituent Churches as then existing, was entering too. North China was the first centre of evangelistic work. W. N. Hall and John Innocent arrived in 1859, and in the following year entered Tientsin, in the province of Chihli. In due course the work extended, and was later developed in the neighbouring province of Shantung, famous by reason of its connexion with Confucius.

Hard on the heels of this enterprise, the United Methodists entered east China in 1864, commencing work at Ningpo, in the province of Chekiang. The city of Wenchow, in the same province, became a centre of work in 1878. This mission has been specially honoured in the person of one of its workers. 'Its most distinguished missionary, W. E. Soothill, was to have a long and varied career, first in pioneer endeavours at Wenchow, then as an educator and author, and still later as Professor of Chinese at Oxford in the chair once held by Legge.'[2]

Some two decades after the entry into east China, the remote and neglected province of Yunnan, in the south-west, became the centre of another pioneer mission of the United Methodists. This was opened in 1886 by T. G. Vanstone and S. T. Thorne. In the following year they

[1] K. S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (1929), p. 376.
[2] K. S. Latourette, op. cit., p. 382.

were joined by Samuel Pollard and Frank Dymond. For more than half of his twenty-eight years in China, Pollard devoted himself to work among the Chinese, but it was among one of the three great non-Chinese races of west China that his most distinguished work was done. The United Methodist Mission serves three aboriginal tribes, the Miao, Nosu, and Kopu. Pollard was the apostle of the despised Miao. They won his heart. He saw their need of a suitable script, that the Word might be done into their speech for them to read, and forthwith invented the ' Pollard script.' He translated the New Testament into this, and, like the Venerable Bede (with whom his biographer draws a parallel), just survived to see his task completed.[1]

In South Africa, Wesleyan missionaries were pioneers in early days. Though Dr. Coke arranged for a man to go to the Cape, the first effective occupation was made by Barnabas Shaw, who landed in 1816. They were difficult days, but he was a man matched for his time. He writes on his arrival, ' Having been refused the sanction of the Government to preach on the following Sunday, I commenced without it.'[2] He moved north to Namaqualand —not through necessity, for the Governor had learned to respect him, and would have had him stay, but through the call of those whose need was greater. His namesake, William Shaw, was the Wesleyan pioneer in territory farther east. He was appointed one of several ministers of religion who accompanied the five thousand settlers of 1820 to Algoa Bay, where Port Elizabeth now stands. His faithful ministry to his fellow countrymen did not divert him from seeking to meet the need of Kaffirland. He had a dream of a chain of stations ' beginning near the border of the Colony and extending along the coast country of Kaffraria to Natal and Delagoa Bay.' It did not remain a dream. East and west the sowers spread, white man and black ; seed that was wind-sown found

[1] W. A. Grist, *Samuel Pollard.*

[2] Findlay and Holdsworth, op. cit., vol. iv., p. 242.

fertile soil, and many an African congregation was discovered awaiting the pastoral care of the mother Church, when her official emissaries first arrived. And so, as movements farther north opened up new lands, the Orange River and the Vaal were crossed; then the Limpopo, and at last the Zambezi itself. But the crossing of the Zambezi had been made already by a sister Methodist Church. To-day work in the sub-continent is under the direction of the South African Conference, with the exception of the Transvaal (with outposts in Swaziland, Portuguese East Africa, and Bechuanaland) and Rhodesia.

In the development of the Transvaal, Methodism has had the privilege of taking a notable part, in the service of both Africans and Europeans. The first Christian minister to reside in Johannesburg was a Methodist. Some 18,000 African members of the Church were won in the first forty years. Mr. Jan Hofmeyr, the distinguished ex-Administrator of the Transvaal, has paid his tribute: 'For the great pioneering work you have done in the Transvaal we in South Africa owe you a great debt of gratitude.'[1] North again the sowers went, and in 1891 Isaac Shimmin settled at Salisbury, in southern Rhodesia. Cecil Rhodes offered £100 per annum towards the work. 'Shimmin's first European service was held in a hut, with a barrel for a reading-desk and a few soap-boxes for his pews. "A congregation of four men crowded in." '[2] Buluwayo, the one-time capital of Lobengula, was entered in 1894; the work was seriously interrupted by the rebellion of 1896; African Christians as a rule were not involved, but they paid the penalty, some to the point of martyrdom, for their Christian faith. In 1912 the first Wesleyan work north of the Zambezi was commenced, by invitation of a chief who had become Christian in the south.

The United Methodists were drawn to East Africa

[1] *Methodist Recorder*, May 2, 1929.
[2] Findlay and Holdsworth, op. cit., vol. iv., p. 382.

while Livingstone was still upon his journeys. Dr. Krapf, of the Church Missionary Society, pioneer, missionary, and explorer, was consulted as to a field. This resulted in his conducting the pioneer party in 1861 to a territory inland from Mombasa. Four men reached the proposed field in January 1862 ; in the autumn one was left to hold it. Thomas Wakefield was joined by a companion in the following spring, a man born for such a time. Charles New, while faithful in his immediate sphere, was straining at the leash. The tribes round Kilimanjaro drew him. In 1871 his long-cherished wish was realized. He visited the Chagga, on the slopes of the mountain, and scaled the summit of the mountain itself, the first European to reach the snow-capped peak. A second centre north of Mombasa along the coast was opened in 1885, but the project to evangelize the Gallas, for which these coast stations were to be the base, though gallantly attempted, was never realized. A wider field for extension came with the new century, when in 1912 a territory on the Kenya highlands was allotted to the mission.[1]

It was in 1870 that the Primitive Methodist Church sent its first missionary, Henry Buckenham, to Aliwal North, in what is now the Cape Province of the Union. Here a continuous ministry has been discharged among European, coloured, and native people. The work has extended to the Orange Free State, and a beginning has been made in Johannesburg. But the outstanding pioneer enterprise of the Primitive Methodists was that undertaken in the early 'nineties north of the Zambezi. On the initiative of John Smith, who had been in touch with François Coillard, of Zambezi fame, the Church decided on the attempt to plant a mission in the heart of Africa. In April 1889 there set out the pioneer party, led by Henry Buckenham and Arthur Baldwin. After exceptional hardships, they reached their objective among the Baila in December 1893. Lewanika, king of the Barotsi, had been responsible for considerable delay. M. Coillard and his colleagues

[1] See A. J. Hopkins, *Trail Blazers and Road Makers.*

were true friends in Christian fellowship in days of tension and distress.[1] William Chapman early joined the pioneers ; he has provided a vivid record of the early days.[2] In this field all the tasks associated with a pioneer enterprise fell to be discharged. Unwritten languages had to be reduced, their structure studied, and translations made into them of the Word of God. Not the languages alone, but the people themselves, their social life and outlook on the world, were the subject of careful study.[3]

West Africa is the one area overseas where all three Churches are at work. In 1859 the United Methodist Church took over, at their own request, a Christian community in Sierra Leone. Joseph New, brother of the East African explorer Charles, was first appointed to the work. This was at first restricted to the Colony, but William Vivian carried forward pioneer work among the Mendis of the hinterland, where contact, though little more, was already made. All was swept away in the disastrous native rising of 1898, but with the new century a promising revival of the work began.[4]

Primitive Methodists first reached West Africa in 1870. They responded to a call from the Spanish island of Fernando Po, in the Gulf of Guinea. From that day to the present time they have been the only Protestant witness on the island. While the actual permanent population is a small and decreasing one, a large influx of indentured labour from the neighbouring mainland in the Cameroons greatly enlarges the missionary opportunity.

In 1893, Primitive Methodist missionaries passed from the island to the mainland of what is now Nigeria, east of the Niger, and began what has proved to be the most flourishing African work of the Church. A densely peopled territory between the Scottish Mission on the

[1] See A. Baldwin, *A Missionary Outpost in Central Africa.*

[2] W. Chapman, *A Pathfinder in South Central Africa.*

[3] Edwin W. Smith and A. Murray Dale, *The Ila-Speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia* (1920).

[4] See Wm. Vivian, *Mendiland Memories.*

Cross River and the Qua Iboe Mission on the river of that name was in due course delimited, lying in the area best known to the world as ' Mary Slessor's Country.' Stations in the Efik-speaking field were rapidly opened up in the new century, an advance made through the virile peoples of Iboland, and a pioneer mission among an untouched people of the northern provinces, the Idoma, in due course commenced, where the task of language reduction and translation has again fallen to the Church.

Meanwhile Wesleyan operations have been steadily advanced, and, notably on the Gold Coast, amazing progress made. The growing wealth of that colony through its prosperous cocoa industry has been reflected in the increased local resources of the Church. West African ' prophets ' have spontaneously proclaimed the evangel, and initiated mass movements that have proved an embarrassment to a Church ill equipped with a native agency to meet them. The most romantic of these movements was that which occurred on the French Ivory Coast on the eve of the Great War. For ten long years those who had responded to the call of the African prophet Wadé Harris waited for the missionaries they were told by him would come. In 1924 they were found waiting, and already a Christian community of more than 43,000 calls for the teaching ministry and pastoral oversight of a Church that must be both nurse and mother to these babes in Christ. Meanwhile advance was made in the Sierra Leone Protectorate, and in 1920 a new mission planted in Mendiland, which has produced a most encouraging response.[1]

Methodist missionaries have taken a worthy share in the task so vital to the witness of Protestant Churches—the translation of the Bible. In addition to language work already mentioned, in Kanarese (Dr. Haigh), Burmese (A. H. Bestall and W. Sherratt), Xosa (J. W. Appleyard),

[1] See F. Deaville Walker, *The Day of Harvest in West Africa*, and *The Story of the Ivory Coast.*

Fiji (James Calvert and Dr. and Mrs. Langham), Mandarin (C. W. Allan), Ronga (H. L. Bishop)—to quote only some representative names—Methodist translators have served the Christian Church.[1]

While we are concerned in this survey with the missionary operations of British Methodism, yet we cannot leave it without an acknowledgement of the splendid enterprise of the Canadian Methodist Church in China and Japan, and among American Indians and Asiatic immigrants at home; and of American Methodism in its far-flung activities from Pacific islands, through Japan, Korea, and China, down by the Dutch East Indies and Malaya, through India, to Africa in many areas, and across to Latin America and the West Indies.[2] It is a girdle round the world.

II. Our fathers had their tasks in their day, and right valiantly did they face them. Dr. Garfield Williams once reminded a student conference: 'If you really knew and had felt something of the superb sacrifice and faith of the missionaries of the Victorian age in Africa, you would not need me or any one else to tell you that there was a new Africa to deal with to-day produced by them.'[3] The new India and the new China would not have presented the challenge they do but for the faithful service of our forefathers. But, while we honour their memory, we must address ourselves to our tasks, not to theirs. What is the challenge of to-day?

The latest international discussion of the affairs of Protestant missions was that at the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council of 1928.[4] We may distinguish three notes in its message that will help to answer our question.

There is a challenge to thought in the conditions of the complex modern world. It is a world that still lives for

[1] See leaflet, *Methodist Missions and the Bible Society*.

[2] Details provided in Beach and Fahs, *World Missionary Atlas* (1925).

[3] *The World Task of the Christian Church* (1925), p. 37.

[4] See the *Jerusalem Meeting Report* (Oxford University Press, 8 vols., 1928). Also *Messages and Recommendations*, separately issued.

the most part in villages. Two-thirds of the world's population, it has been estimated, or some 1,000,000,000 people, can be described as rural in the sense that they live on the land and depend primarily upon it. The great mission fields of the world are from 75 to 85 per cent. rural. India, for example, boasts of three-quarters of a million of villages. 'It is one of the paradoxes of India that, while she is one of the eight premier industrial nations of the world, she is not an industrial nation at all. She is an agricultural nation, and 73 per cent. of her population are engaged in agriculture and stock-raising.'[1] China, for all her mighty city centres, has some 100,000 villages and 1,000,000 hamlets occupied by rural population. As an indication of the task that lies upon the Christian mission in carrying its message to India there may be offered the statement, 'After a century or more of effort the major part of the work of the Church is urban in location and character; that is, it serves the urban tenth of India. Even if all Christians were villagers, barely one per cent. of this great population would be so numbered. Hundreds of thousands of villages have had no touch with the Christian Church.'[2] So much for the magnitude of the rural task. If we are to act wisely and help successfully, we must apply our minds to the understanding of the rural problem, with its many ramifications, as it confronts the Church to-day.[3] Methodism has witnessed in the past a remarkable response to her ministry among rural populations in Britain and America; the circuit organization and the development of the lay ministry have in particular facilitated her appeal, while the fellowship of the class meeting has satisfied a human need all the more keenly felt in small isolated settlements. But the earlier isolation is rapidly disappearing, and upon many villages new influences are playing. We must give our thought to the rural situation of to-day.

[1] *Jerusalem Meeting Report*, vol. v., p. 31. [2] *Ib.*, vol. vi., p. 218.
[3] See *Ib.*, vol. vi., 'Missions and Rural Problems,' where these questions are discussed.

While the world is still predominantly rural, yet the change that came over Europe in the nineteenth century, so radical as to be termed a revolution, is proceeding apace in other continents too. Industrialism is invading the life of every people. Village industries there have always been, even, with few exceptions, amongst undeveloped tribes of Central Africa. It is machine industry of which we speak. William Paton states for India, 'In the year 1915 the total number of persons employed in textile industries was about one million. In 1924 it had risen to a million and a half employed daily. In 1915 the number of factories in British India subject to the Factories Acts was 2,922, whereas in the year 1924 it was 6,406, an increase partly accounted for by the extension of the Act to smaller factories, but none the less remarkable. The increase in the number of persons employed in the mining industry has been nearly as remarkable.'[1] Readers of *The Golden Stool*[2] will be familiar in outline with the situation facing the African to-day. These questions have raised into sharp and clear-cut definition the social aspect of the presentation of our message. Fifty years ago the missionary might stand alone as the authentic messenger of God; to-day his message is tested by the society of which he is a part. Two African leaders stated their convictions for their own people at the Le Zoute Conference of 1926: 'Reaction has taken place in the African's mind through the advance of Western civilization. The missionary comes with a message of the love of God, and speaks of loving your neighbour as yourself. . . . The average African looks upon every white man as a Christian, and, if he does not lead the Christian life, then the mind of the African revolts against Christianity' (the Rev. Z. R. Mahabane). 'The test that the Africans I know bring to Christianity as they see it is the social teaching of Jesus. They say, "What you white men do speaks so loud that we cannot

[1] *Jerusalem Meeting Report*, vol. v., p. 31.
[2] E. W. Smith, *The Golden Stool: Some Aspects of the Conflict of Cultures in Modern Africa* (1926).

hear what you say" ' (Mr. Max Yergan).[1] There lies in these problems a challenge to the hardest thinking we Christian disciples can undertake. We are to serve the Lord in the missionary task of the Church with all our mind.

There is a challenge to friendship. As world relationships become more numerous and complex a larger opportunity is presented for personal and corporate reactions to attitudes of other individuals and peoples. It is a Methodist tradition to be the 'friends of all and the enemies of none.' We can give full proof of such a calling in our day. There is, first of all, that sphere where common ground is easiest to find—our relations with neighbouring Christian agencies in the task of world evangelization. The comity of missions is the statement of a doctrine to which all pay at least lip service, and which we agree would serve admirably in someone else's field, but it requires true Christian grace to apply it in our own. The call to the united Church will be to serve the needs of the world, not for the greater glory of Methodism, but along with others as the eager friend of all.

An opportunity for friendship, and an insistent challenge to our expression of it, comes with the rise of the younger Churches. Methodism has never been a laggard in setting up her children as independent branches of her great family. The Canadian Conference of 1854, the Australian of 1855, the South African of 1883, and the short-lived West Indian Conferences of the same year are all ample evidence of that. But a different problem confronts her to-day. What of the desire of the Chinese Christians to develop their Christian fellowship on a national rather than on a denominational basis? And what of the same movement in South India at the moment? We can be grateful that we have missionary leaders in full and hearty sympathy with their people's longings, who will send them with their blessing into union with their neighbours. But such requests, as they

[1] E. W. Smith, *The Christian Mission in Africa* (1926), p. 38.

arrive, reveal by our reaction whether we are selfish or not in the work that we are doing.[1]

We have chosen two examples of friendship within the Christian fellowship, though differing in their racial context. We indicate a third, the greatest challenge of any to our capacity for friendship in the world of our day—that of racial conflict in its widest setting. It is a commonplace that we reach the ultimate problem presented by our human environment when we approach the question of inter-racial relations. The Jerusalem Meeting had the advantage of an inter-racial discussion of the matter, only limited in its range of attitudes by the fact—though surely the most highly significant fact of all—that those who shared in it spoke primarily as disciples of a common Lord. Mr. D. D. T. Jabavu, of Fort Hare, stated, 'One of the greatest difficulties in the way of black people in South Africa building up their own Church is the feeling that even under Christian missions there is no equality in Church or State. Islam is gaining more African adherents because of the attitude on this question.'[2] This is not a mere matter of sentimental friendliness, but of a capacity for friendship that shall overleap the barrier of colour and all that it implies, subject only to those qualifications which we, as Christians, could accept for our own race. It means above all that the Church becomes a home for all her children. The late Canon W. H. T. Gairdner, of Cairo, writing in another context of the brotherhood of Islam, so real to Moslems that 'unless we can show them a brotherhood that is higher, better, more spiritual, warmer, tenderer—in one word, truer—they will marvel that we have the face to preach to them at all,' goes on to speak of 'the original conception of the Christian Church, whose specially warm fraternal love within the spiritual brotherhood did not in

[1] See Findlay and Holdsworth, op. cit., vol. v., where these problems are discussed for India by E. W. Thompson (pp. 410–18), and for China by H. B. Rattenbury (pp. 547–62). See also, for the South India proposals, *The Review of the Churches*, January 1927, pp. 30–48; progress has been made since this statement.

[2] *Jerusalem Meeting Report*, vol. iv., p. 223.

the least spell chilliness, much less hostility, to those without; but rather guaranteed a universal friendliness and an all-embracing benevolence, the very qualities which most of all attracted souls to join the fellowship, so that they might share the more intense warmth within.'[1] Methodism, with her tradition of glowing fellowship, must here show that she looks outward and not inward because of it; that the joy of sharing her best with mankind in the name of her Lord far outweighs any self-centred pleasure among the friends of her own household. She has one great advantage for this inter-racial service for which the world is waiting. It has been the Methodist tradition overseas to minister to our own countrymen as well as to the population native to the territory; this has been the case in the West Indies, in South Africa, in New Zealand, in Ceylon, and in the Indian Empire. Such an all-embracing service is of the very spirit of the Master, when the fellowship of all believers is maintained. This challenge to friendship is one which, in its varied forms, plainly discovers our spiritual attitude.

There is in our day an insistent challenge to present a living Christian witness. The Christian life and message was the foremost topic at Jerusalem. This was considered in relation to the main non-Christian systems. But the controlling factor, it was agreed, in the world to-day, was no longer that of so-called rival faiths, but rather a common challenge that was facing all religions everywhere—that of the advancing tide of secularism. Here are some of the voices heard at Jerusalem:

'In the student life of western India the greatest enemy was not Hinduism, but secularism. Many students had shed the old ways of life and had found nothing to take their place' (Principal John Mackenzie, of Bombay).[2]

'I believe that the battle-field of Christianity in China is not in the realm of the non-Christian religions, but in

[1] J. R. Mott, *The Moslem World of To-day* (1925), pp. 284, 285.
[2] *Jerusalem Meeting Report*, vol. i., p. 363.

the realm of secularism ' (Professor T. C. Chao, of Peking).[1]

' Those large numbers in modern Japan who are the product of modern forces . . . want the things which science creates—better food, better clothes, finer homes, interesting movies, and all the external things in which civilization is so rich. Anything beyond these things they do not seriously seek or think of ' (Dr. A. K. Reischauer, of Japan).[2]

' The Moslem world has been greatly affected by secularism. . . . The motto of the modern Moslem is, " There is no God but cotton, and the pound sterling is the apostle of cotton " ' (Dr. C. R. Watson, of Cairo).[3] This is not an attitude confined to what we have usually termed the ' mission fields ' of the world. Mr. Basil Mathews has recently summarized his experience in city centres of the West : ' During the last three years the author's work has taken him into some ten capital or metropolitan cities in Europe and America. The list may be useful for precision's sake—Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Prague, Helsingfors, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Berne, London, Edinburgh, New York (with Chicago, Washington, and Denver). His conviction is that in those cities the one powerful influence in the life of youth is the expanding power of personal achievement and enjoyment offered by twentieth-century secular civilization. So far as essential Christianity is concerned, as a redemptive power in the individual life of youth and as presenting regulative ideas in which young men can believe that the world can be re-shaped, the thinking and forceful elements in the youth of European capitals are practically a non-Christian world.'[4] It has been the strength of the Methodist Church in other days that on the ground of a common Christian experience her fellowship was maintained. It is the witness of that experience in all the relationships of modern life that is the ' laboratory experiment ' demanded to convince the world that our

[1] *Jerusalem Meeting Report*, vol. i., p. 358.
[2] *Ib.*, p. 230.
[3] *Ib.*, p. 402.
[4] Basil Mathews, *The Commonwealth of Youth* (1928), p. 22.

faith is not a sham. We shall utilize all the splendid equipment that modern civilization can provide, and maintain the Christian's freedom as ruled by love, which is the glory of his life in Christ. We are not called to a Puritan rejection of God's rich gifts through the brain and hand of man. Yet this wealth of environment will enter into our lives as servant and not as master; not to dominate and starve the life of the spirit in us, but rather to be used in a high and holy calling. 'Ye shall be My witnesses' are the Master's words to-day. The situation we have reviewed offers their twentieth-century context.

Methodists cannot consummate their closer union and not suffer if they ignore these challenging demands of our time. What might be has been signalized in that larger union entered upon in Canada in 1925. It is reported that the *United Church Missionary Review*, which superseded the three missionary periodicals of the uniting Churches, had, within four years of union, more than trebled their previous combined circulations—an index, it is said, of the new missionary spirit of the Church which is seeking to express its quickened life in wider service. There is much still to be done which a new-born Church, devoted to her Master, could make possible. On many fields our workers wait impatiently to extend their direct evangelistic work; our educational service needs the very best that we can give to prepare Christian leaders for the Church and for society, and to provide a training in which the gifts that come through school and college are offered as the gifts of God; the steady increase of literacy in all lands calls for a larger literary activity on the part of the Christian Church.[1] Medical work is often crippled for lack of resources and of staff, yet we are called to enlarge this ministry, and in particular to train those who can help others; the changing life of society and the emergence of the individual to a new self-respect

[1] The distinguished service of the late W. T. Balmer as Secretary of the West African Literature Society indicates the opportunity. For a recent discussion of the Literary work of the missionary, see E. W. Smith, *The Shrine of a People's Soul* (1929).

often requires the assistance that industrial training can supply, and we want to be ready to give it.

Why should not the united Church express her quickened life in some new regional advance—not as a spectacular 'demonstration,' but as an obligation to be discharged in taking a yet larger share in the service of the world? The Methodist Churches have scarcely touched the problem of the Moslem world. Women of the Wesleyan Society in India are attempting it a little, but no specific effort to reach a Moslem population with the gospel has been undertaken. Some early workers in West Africa looked with longing to the day when their work upon the coast would be the base for an advance into the western Sudan, to the bend of the Niger and beyond, the scene of mighty Negro empires when the Europe of the day was submerged in the gloom of the dark ages. The accessibility of these peoples in temperament has been pointed out.[1] The already developed work in colonies along the coast should lay a peculiar obligation upon the Methodist Church to be ready for any advance into these historic lands. The approach to Moslem peoples in friendship and loving service, which is Christ's way, is superseding the method of crusade by dialectic.[2] But carefully selected and well-trained workers would be needed, Arabic students with a capacity beyond the ordinary for making friends. If any such advance could be undertaken in co-operation with a sister Church, that would be a double opportunity we should seize.

Methodism's call to world service comes in many forms. From the side of human need, it might be argued that to-day the guarantee of world peace is the most urgent claim upon mankind. But peace depends not merely negatively on the eliminating of possible sources of conflict, but positively on right human relationships. The recognition of the common humanity of all peoples, carrying the implication of the right of each to develop

[1] See Félix Dubois, *Timbuctoo the Mysterious* (1897), p. 300.
[2] See Lootfy Levonian, *Moslem Mentality: A Discussion of the Presentation of Christianity to Moslems* (1928).

personality to its fullest ; the appreciation of the peculiar and necessary contribution each group can make towards the common good ; the desire that all men should co-operate in a crusade against the common enemies of man —these are the basis of enduring peace. But such fundamental attitudes are the gift of Christ in His redeeming power in human life. We best advance the cause of peace as we proclaim His name.

From the side of our loyalty to our common Lord, we feel the sweet compulsion from the very nature of our message and of our Master's will. We can join with His disciples of all the Churches as He led them to express it :

' Our true and compelling motive lies in the very nature of the God to whom we have given our hearts. Since He is love, His very nature is to share. Christ is the expression in time of the eternal self-giving of the Father. Coming into fellowship with Christ, we find in ourselves an over-mastering impulse to share Him with others. We are constrained by the love of Christ and by obedience to His last command.'[1]

[1] *Jerusalem Meeting Report*, vol. i., p. 485.

XI

METHODISM AND MODERN YOUTH

By J. Rounsefell, M.A., B.Sc.

It is toward the end of May, and, as I sit in my room pondering over this subject, spring is spread round about me like a flood, a flood which has quenched the last pale embers of autumn. The fields are freshly green, the hedges are instinct with beauty and life, the cuckoo is singing lustily in a southern copse ; and not far away is a school of boys, revelling in the springtime of their life, their youth bright with gaiety and joy.

But spring fades very swiftly ; it goes and cannot be retarded. Snowdrop, of course, and primrose have disappeared ; the campion is wilting ; the delicate transparency of the beech-leaves is vanishing ; even the monotonous chant of the cuckoo has undergone a change ; the accent is heavy now on the first note of his song ; the pitch has altered. It is all very transitory, this peculiar and unique loveliness of spring. So back wend my thoughts, schoolward again ; there, too, another spring will presently suffer transformation ; manhood's summer and—we trust—fruitful autumn will one day appear, but youth itself is fragile, like the flower stalk ; short-lived, like the spring.

But we are not invited to meditate on youth because it is lovely merely, for youth has its ugly and repellent aspects too ; nor because it is fleeting, for its very brevity has in it something timeless also, although its grace and transiency will add weight and urgency to our message, but in the main for other reasons ; first, because we believe that religion, and perhaps Methodism in particular,

has a word for youth's unrest, if her teachers have not forgotten how this great word is spelt; and, second, because we realize how the security of the Church and the extension of the Kingdom must always find their safest foundations in the hearts of the young. And that is why—to quote a recent writer, quite away from his context—we should 'know by what courses the streams come down from the hills of childhood; perceive how and with what earthly stains or heavenly reflections they are gathered together in the torrents of youth, perhaps to guess a little of the seas to which they go.'

So, not the bickering brook of childhood—indeed, we do begin to know something of this streamlet; glorious teachers from Froebel to Montessori have tracked it to its source, measured its depth, calculated its speed—but the torrent—that is another matter; quite a difficult business to estimate its energy, perhaps dangerous sometimes even to try. But what mill wheels it will presently turn if we can confine its waters, what argosies it will bear if we can conserve its strength!

But the metaphor shows signs of running away with us; we would not have it appear that when a youth has joined the Church we regard him as a tame torrent, a cataract now sedate and well behaved. Some such charge has been made at various times, but no Church worthy of its divine Master can fail to value, not the work alone, but the vehemence, fire, and enterprise intrinsic in the young, nor fail to bear with their changeability and indiscipline; it is indeed preciously true that they serve who only stand and wait, but it is equally true that they also may serve who do the precise opposite, and the years when religion has resembled a torrent, in its defiance and tumult, have not been the least illustrious of its story.

But to understand 'modern youth' it will be necessary to realize something of the world into which it has been born; its heroes—are they heroic? its ideals—are

they worthy? its affirmations and denials, its confusions, its sense of wasted wealth and squandered life; are we competent to assess them? The phrase 'before the war' begins to shed its meaning; most of the boys I teach were not born when the war began; many do not remember the day on which it ceased. We and they belong to two different periods, and must see to it that we at least speak the same spiritual language.

In the dark depths of 1916, when Verdun was being attacked, two Frenchmen, familiar with the country, crept into the shelters and casemates which were to be their home for many a long day. Over the surrounding country, across the fortress itself, swept the tempest of fire; presently its fury subsided, and from their narrow refuge these two crept out and discovered that that iron gale had expunged the very signs by which they had recognized the landscapes; hills had begun to crumble, and valleys had filled with débris, and for a time these poor men were lost in their own home.

But so have been many since; the war prostrated many a landmark, threw out of focus many a standard. Years ago E. F. Benson asserted that 'the man in the street is the father of the average boy'; certain it is that to-day the average youth is the son of the man who lived and fought in the trenches, or was in other ways involved in war.

So, if we are tempted to blame, let us hesitate; or, if to despond, let us remember; for landscapes have to be reconstructed, and the new tracks laid, and valleys exalted and rough places made smooth. In words which every Methodist may be assumed to know, 'Be steady; the Christian faith will surely revive in this Kingdom: you shall see it, though I shall not.'

But, none the less, the world is a different world; its teachers are different; Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells have a message other than that of Robert Browning and George Eliot; its view of the constitution of the universe has been transformed; we all move in an environment

only half realized, in a region of half-lights, in a landscape unfamiliar and but dimly descried.

All this reacts upon the task which is laid on the Churches; as far as external conditions go, they 'take off,' as boys say, from a ground which quakes and sways beneath their feet; their great duty of evangelism presents difficulties of the same order as those which confronted our earliest pioneers. Sir Michael Sadler puts it from another angle: 'A religious tradition which, like the English, is in the main defective in its intellectual framework, and which, though full of life, rests in a large degree upon customary relationships, is liable to be for a time severely shaken by any great change in the established order of society'—a quaking world—an order 'severely shaken.'

Turn from them to our material, this 'modern youth'—'Paul' and 'Betty,' the *Daily News* calls them—free, light-hearted, unconventional, avid of new experiences; loving games to infatuation, good 'sports,' kind of heart, shallow of spirit, not much depth of earth, perhaps even stained with passion and dimmed by folly.

But judgements like this merely show how easy and comfortable it is to sit, if not actually in the seat of the scornful, at least on the raised platform of the censorious. Youth may well demand a more scrupulous discernment and a more gentle verdict than is so often delivered. Nor does all our youth happen to belong to the Betty and Paul clan, whose lives appear so care-free and secure; here are Bill and Jenny too, who left school at fourteen, and found the street their drawing-room and its mutter a part of their language, and had few aids to virtue and still less to religion.

But, in the depths of their natures, they will all be linked by many bonds of kindred; they will all share in the common inheritances of youth—laughter and movement, passionate longings and inexplicable despairs; the skies will be bluer and the stars brighter, and the flowers more fragrant than they will know again. Over them

love will have begun to cast a shadowing wing ; there will be untold dreams, fancies which cannot be expressed, fears which shake the being, often a high courage, a fiery sense of justice, a faith which does not lack substance because it cannot readily be defined ; needs as deep as their humanity, which religion alone can satisfy.

In this whirl of their emotions, in the uproar and clamour of the senses, is there any voice which can speak with the authority of Christ ? Not necessarily ; but that is not the point at issue ; rather it is, can we Methodists so illuminate and reveal that sacred Figure that boy and girl, youth and maiden, will recognize the portrait as authentic, the doctrine as real ?

Perhaps we might pause for a moment over that last word ' real.' Youth, we are told, is eager for reality. Perhaps it would be safer to say that youth's aim is not so lofty and austere as the word ' reality ' suggests. Would it not be simpler just to affirm that we are being inspected, thoroughly, unhastily, even dispassionately, to discover whether we are, or are not, ' sincere,' whether our own modes of life are in accord with a standard we have ourselves proclaimed and exalted ? ' Dick ' Sheppard—and really one ought not to write 'Dick ' of a dean, were it not that there can be few deans so widely and so deservedly loved—writes : ' My first plea, then, is that those who are teaching Christianity to the youth of to-day should be really attempting to live it out. Language is useful, but action is much more useful. Youth is not wholly without wisdom. It can be trusted to know if its teachers are the sort who are practising what they teach. If not, well, they may learn the formulae of religion, and even be able to repeat them, but they are not likely to become practising Christians.' In Arthur Sidgwick's little book, entitled *Stimulus*, he relates how an indignant teacher called to order a boy in the back seat who was writing an imposition : ' Here, boy, what do you mean by writing " lines " when I am teaching you ? ' This was

met by the soft answer—which, I very much fear, did not turn away wrath—' I didn't know, sir, you were teaching ; I thought you were only talking.' When Polonius asks Hamlet what he is reading, Hamlet replies, ' Words, words, words ' ; if that had been all, and he had not read meanings too, his devotion to literature at that moment would have been of little worth. And if our young charges, reading our hearts, searching for the meaning of life, eager to discover whether we have the meaning in our possession, find that it is merely words, then the words are mere vanity ; if it is merely talking, then it signifieth nothing. And, again, if the words prove to be sacred and expressive symbols of a life lived in faith and based on the righteousness of Christ, then we shall be pardoned for our many mistakes, and blessed for the new standing we had made for their young feet.

It is not quite clear that, as Methodists, we have realized the full gravity of this question, nor, indeed, comprehended to how high a service we are called. We hear of the great captains of the pulpit and the tall ships of religious enterprise, but do not perceive that we too are called to do business in great waters. It does not make a home in our hearts that a quarter of the population of the world are adolescents, that that age contains the promise of the world's evangelization, and that it is here that is the hottest of the fight and here the prizes of victory are the most impressive and august.

> There is a day in spring
> When, under all the earth, the secret germs
> Begin to glow and stir before they bud.
> The wealth and festal pomp of midsummer
> Are in the heart of that inglorious day
> Which no man names with blessing, though its worth
> Is known to all the world.

That is the poet's version of the accepted time, the day of salvation. One man, at any rate, once a youth, grown

presently to manhood, will not name that day without a blessing, and, if a teacher or a preacher take some share in the decisions of the day, then perhaps when winter has whitened his hair, and age has trenched his brow, his will be a share in the pomp of the midsummer which is aflame in his scholar's heart.

I was once the possessor of a little friend—no longer now a child—about five years of age. It was Christmas-tide, and the great problem of Santa Claus—his mode of arrival, how he could best circumvent the evil arrangements of modern chimneys, and so on—were much discussed ; but Christmas morning found all these obstinate questionings safely solved or quietly shelved, and the new toys he had brought were the subjects of the liveliest interest. Casting an unintentional gloom over the little man's happiness, I said, ' And now you will be able to give away all your other toys, won't you ? ' ' Oh, no,' he replied, with clouded eyes ; ' you see, they aren't broken yet.' Had they been broken they would no doubt have been elected to a wider if, alas ! less efficient service.

Perhaps the greatest task of Methodism will be to deliver to the world, for its help and its healing, youth, unimpaired and whole, strong and elastic, swift and enduring, unbroken by the world's bludgeon, unbewildered by her spells.

It has been said that from our sermons has fallen the old ' appeal ' ; if, and in so far as, this is so, it is a grievous, a fatal loss ; but appeals may be of many varieties, deep calling unto deep in manifold ways ; but it is due to every girl, to every lad, that when adolescence breaks upon them, they should be frankly, lovingly, personally faced with the claims of Christ and the ideals enshrined in the Gospels.

Nor is this a duty to be lightly performed, in faded terms, in phrases long since outworn, long since demagnetized. ' Gospel ' means ' good news ' ; it is a blessing that it is good, but it is more than that ; it is ' news,' still

only just escaped from the event which gave it birth, still warm from the presses of our heart.

One is tempted at times to believe that it is to the pipes of Pan that youth listens most readily, to the soft Lydian lute, with its quiet, enervating strains, but possibly that is because we have never seen to it that they should hear the fanfare of the trumpet, the réveillé of the bugle, arousing and summoning to no life of ease, but to the Holy War in which Mansoul is ever engaged. Religion without a challenge degenerates into a moral system. Religion which ceases to be belligerent is already half enslaved.

Well our fathers and founders knew this ; religion with them brought, not peace, but a sword. Their equipment may have been less finished, their instruments less chaste, than those we know, but they possessed the trumpet, clear, sonorous, provocative, and it was its clangour which woke so many hearts. Can we have mislaid it ? Is it by any chance hidden somewhere in our studies, or lying, forgotten and unregarded, amid our multifarious tasks ?

On the tombstone of a distinguished scholar—Dr. Prince Lee, first Bishop of Manchester—is the one word Σαλπίγξει ' A trumpet shall sound.' He was thinking, no doubt, of the Last Trump, and of the great Angel of the Resurrection, but to the eye of faith these words are often strangely visible : written across North Devon, say, in 1815—' A trumpet shall sound ' ; and, from 1738, inscribed across England by Wesley's giant hand—' A trumpet shall sound.' And it is for all teachers and all preachers and all Christian workers to see there is written across the heart of the youth of this generation those electrifying words—' A trumpet shall sound.'

' But why bother so ; why stress this point to exhaustion ? Youth will have many chances, many opportunities, hear the gospel in many guises and varied tongues. Let youth have its fling ; it vanishes—as you know—with the rose.'

We might accept this pleading—it is very widely welcomed—were it not that there is in the New Testament an unmistakable note of haste, of urgency. It broods, does that great book, with the eyes of its great Subject, over the world, grave but not menacing, austere but not implacable, uncompromising but not intolerant. Of course, it seems to say, youth may have an infinite number of chances ; the grace of God is like the gates of the Holy City, which are open all the day, and where there is no night. It is not the mercy of God, nor the redeeming love of Christ, which is under question, but man's fragile will, the swing away from the sun.

In *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest*, A. Schweitzer relates the story of the mahogany-trees. His home lies in Africa, by the side of a lake, which is separated by an embankment from the river. Round about the lake grow the great trees, destined eventually for the use and ornament of European and American homes. And when the great rains come, the mahogany-trees are cut down, their branches lopped, and they themselves dragged into the lake. Then they lie and wait, while from a thousand runnels the level of the lake rises, bearing on it the noble trunks of the glorious trees. Presently the rains have raised so high the level of the lake that the logs can with ease be pushed over the embankment, to begin their journey to the sea and their predestined service. But, if the rains have been too scanty, it may well happen that the mahogany will fail to rise to the level of the embankment. Yes, but what matters that ? Next season may well suffice. ' No,' says the missionary, ' there is no next season. Before next season's rains have come the logs have been perforated by reptiles, softened by the water of the lake, eaten into by fungi : now timber no longer ; mere rotten touchwood.'

Youths are not inanimate timbers. The resources of the compassion of Christ are boundless ; but who can forecast to what height the tides of emotion, of contrition, and resolve will rise, and whether, if one flood-time is missed,

another of equal volume and height will ever again be observed?

The call of Christ is very audible in youth; as years go on it becomes less and less perceptible, as if the voice were receding or grown faint with fatigue. Neither of these suggestions is true; it is we who have strayed, and, when we have left the bright and unobstructed atmosphere of youth behind us, hear with difficulty and uncertainty the message which had once been as clear as the chiming of bells in frosty air, as fresh and invigorating as the winds which blow across the snow.

Nor must our appeal be merely individual and personal. The gospel sets up a stream of ripples in every heart which receives it. Many echoes derive from the first harmony, many reflections from the first illumination; and the Methodist Churches have owed much of their power to this ability to assemble and concentrate these scattered lights, these broken notes, for service and use. Nor has it hesitated to summon its young servants and soldiers to be workers together with God, fulfilling His purpose and interpreting His love. It has affirmed with the poet, S. R. Lysaght:

> We have beheld the evil and the good,
> And know, ourselves, the strength of wrong withstood.
> May it not be that God is everywhere
> Striving Himself against eternal wrong?
>
> May it not be that on that battle-field
> He needs the help of those His love would shield
> May not His arm be bound by our despair
> May not our courage help to make it strong?

Hence the numerous openings and avenues the Church has made for her young—the Sunday School, the Christian Endeavour, Wesley Guild, and Band of Hope. Even so, we do not apparently gather into societies with the same alacrity as the youth of America, societies which are so

numerous as to need to be classified into nine different varieties, with names full of colour and romance, like 'The Captains of Ten,' 'The Princely Knights of Character Castle,' 'Bands of Mercy,' 'The Coming Men of America.'

Is there none among us capable of giving to local preaching once again its old authority, its desirability as a means of service, its worth-whileness as a means of the cultivation of the preacher's own mind and spirit? Through what over-broad mesh of the Christian net have our young people slipped? Surely the anxious and preoccupied hearts of youth have heard the words of the Lord of the Vineyard, 'Why stand ye here all the day idle'? Is it possible that they defend themselves by pointing in our direction, and saying, 'No man hath hired us'? I do not think it would be a fair charge; but it is a prize worth contending for that there should be more often heard from our pulpits the stammered words, the incomplete exegesis, if we felt the service flushed with zeal and crowned with youthful promise.

For many years in European history, the cry, 'Jerusalem in the hands of the infidels' thrilled whole nations and inspired crusade after crusade. It was a beckoning to high endeavour, to duty and self-sacrifice. How deep its imprint and how lasting its attractiveness can be inferred from the fact that Marco Polo, in the thirteenth century, on his journey to Pekin, passed the famous 'Dry Tree,' which would only break into foliage when Jerusalem was free.

But that is only to speak in figure. Jerusalem is always unfree as long as there is an unemancipated heart, as long as there are bonds and chains to freedom or men are anywhere slaves, in body or in spirit, and the Holy Grail will never be found save in the heart dedicated to high purpose and to Christian hope, and when that happens, somewhere or other, in Sunday school or class meeting or otherwhere, the 'Dry Tree' comes into leaf, the thorn changes to myrtle. Yes, but the interest in humanity,

the deep sympathy with its woes, the passion to right the wrong, which this implies—well, if it has stepped from the pulpit to the street corner—I say, if it has—then the 'prophet on horseback' of the eighteenth century would say, 'God bless it' wherever it was found; and present-day Methodists will echo their founder's words.

For there has broken upon us a day when the informed and sanctified mind is to come into its own on wider fields than ever before, and Methodism must have its say through its young people, whatever the channel may be. It was in the heat and splendour of the Evangelical Revival that the slaves of the West Indies were emancipated, and if, born of the resources that Methodism first made available, fashioned by the tools which she was the first to forge, the evangel should again fire young hearts, it may conceivably be that the revival which has been so often forecast may be quite other than we had expected.

After all, Factory Acts and the succour of the chimney-sweep and the building of the Ragged School were only translations in Lord Shaftesbury's heart from his passion for Christ into a passion for men. When Kreisler, with all his genius and all his possibilities, sacrifices his own comfort because it cannot be shared by others less fortunate—'between us and our home stands the crowd of the homeless'—he is uttering words ringing, not only with humanity, but with Christianity—words that can fling their living spell over the young regenerate heart which is the jewel of the Church and the hope of the world.

'In a flash he saw it all, saw this grim little world of battle and cruelty transfigured in a splendour that outshone the Angelic Land, suffused suddenly and insupportably glorious with the wonderful light of love and self-sacrifice.' No prize is offered for the identification of the author of that quotation—he is no friend of the Christian faith—but, whether we can detect the author

or not, that experience, that sudden and blinding light which breaks on youthful hearts, contains within it the expectation of the new world, the epiphany of the Kingdom of God.

And now how to capture and to hold fast our youth. Alas! that it will be necessary to wander for a while in the well-travelled regions of platitude and self-evident truth.

Can we, then, do anything availing to renew the old interest in the Bible? Possibly. I am not sure. To be certain that the Bible was once again a burning focus of interest, that its stories were again wells of inspiration, that its words were like beacons from Sunday to Sunday, that its message, whether spoken to us in the ear or shouted from the housetops, was welcome, authoritative, inexhaustible—why, this would be to recognize that our problem was largely solved.

But perhaps we do not begin far enough back; maybe it is we parents who should be at school; there will be no school like home—is that a vain thing to say?—no teacher like mother—is that merely an idle word? It was not always. Here are some words from 1801: 'I know the difficulties of this question.' (It is good to remember that Pestalozzi, who wrote these words, knew.) 'People all cry that mothers will not be persuaded to undertake a new work in addition to their scrubbing and rubbing, their knitting and sewing; and I may answer: "It is no work, it is play; it takes up no time; rather it fills up the emptiness of a thousand moments of depression." People have no mind for it, and answer back, "They won't do it." But Pope Boniface, in the year 1519, said to the good Zwingli, "It won't do; mothers will through all eternity never read the Bible with their children, never through all eternity pray with them morning and evening"; yet he found in the year 1522 that they did it, and said, "I never should have believed it."' The histories of the Reformation tell the rest of that story.

But, if this is impracticable, we can at any rate introduce our youth to the light which scholarship has shed on the Bible's pages ; it is really time that assured results, won by the unremitting toil and insight of generations of students, should be made available, that the great story of Israel should yield up its secrets, have its tangled skeins unravelled as far as devout learning can. There is, at any rate, no such history as the history of Israel.

I have watched boys' faces, tolerantly listening to the story of Naaman, quicken into vivid interest when it was explained that the reason why Naaman desired two mule-loads of earth was because he thought God could be worshipped only in His own land, and therefore, as he could not worship Him in Syria, where other gods had the pre-eminence, he could still call upon the name of Elisha's God if he had some of Israel's earth on which he might stand. And I have found them deeply interested in questions of morals that so swiftly arise in this book's consideration. We had been reading the First Book of Samuel, and had read of the wickedness of Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, and then had proceeded to the battle in which Israel's hopes had been quenched. But the battle was not the point of interest ; that lay quite off the battle-field ; rather this : if Hophni and Phinehas were so wicked as had been explained, why was it that they of all people bore the Ark of God ? It was a penetrating question, but led presently to some explanation of a gradual revelation, away from the time when morality and religion were regarded as separate areas, up to the words and ways of our Lord, who fused morality and religion into one.

But, after all, these examples belong rather to the circumference than to the centre of our teaching. It is the Bible as the companion of devotion, as the express revelation of Christ, as the statement of our relationship to Him, that we need, and teaching and devotion must converge on this centre. But with what caution and

care we must move, with what thoughtfulness, every teacher will agree. Among my many mistakes, I reproach myself for having told a boy in moral difficulty that he should read the Bible for help. It was quite true; but why did I not indicate where he should look, and what he might expect to find? So I ought not to have been surprised that, when later I inquired, he told me—told me rather as if he had been eating sawdust—that he had read some chapters in Proverbs and one in Revelation, but had not found them strikingly helpful.

To quote from the Joint Committee's Report on Religious Instruction, 'The religious instruction of boys and girls should begin with the life and words of Jesus Christ, with special reference to the Christian conception of God. At this stage we wish to see the Gospels studied not so much from the point of view of the detailed criticism of the text as in broad lines of Christian belief and Christian practice, so that boys and girls may realize that the only Christian view of God is that which Christ held.'

Then later, and most important, 'in view of the mental atmosphere into which boys and girls will be plunged when they leave school, some attempt should be made to ensure that in their last terms at school they are encouraged to face the difficulties they will meet, and to realize how many of them are based on mistaken notions of what Christianity really is.' And then that quite ordinary teachers might not be alarmed at the requirements, they add: 'The Committee recognize that the effect of any divinity teaching must ultimately depend on the teacher. They do not wish to see this teaching limited to experts, and consider the two qualifications for a teacher to be: first, that he should profess and call himself a Christian, and, secondly, that he should be prepared to equip himself for his task by a reasonable course of study.'

It is indeed the teacher, steeped in his material, alive to his message, and moved with affection towards his class, who is the greatest of all influences. Should not

the heart of the young Methodist, who hesitates to take a class in Sunday school, burn within him? This is how one great teacher writes of another: Sir Henry Jones of Edward Caird, 'I was born in Llangernyw in 1852 and born again in 1876 in Edward Caird's class-room.' And again, 'There was neither art nor passion, unless perfect sincerity of soul and simplicity of manner be an art, and unless the pure eloquence of reflective thought be a passion. Against the power of these his ardent young hearers knew no defence. There was nothing to rival the sway of their reverence for his strong, calm, thought-laden personality, except their affection.'

'But we cannot all be Edward Cairds,' you say; 'besides, I teach in a Sunday school very different from the schools of which you write.' 'Yes, dear boy, and it is a brave and faithful thing to do. But there is a better Sunday school coming than we have known if all its teachers remain loyal, live up to their ideals, spin their filaments of affection around their class, are capable of enlivening, encouraging, rebuking, resisting; and in particular, by life and word, however halting, of commending Christ.'

I remember the name of a master at my own school many years ago, quite unknown to fame. On one of the first evenings of term the boys had a 'sing-song,' and the new master was invited to speak—of malice aforethought, no doubt. He spoke but a few words, but this was their tenor: 'We know very little of one another, and so I should like to say this one word: I am a Christian, and I am trying to order my life in accordance with the teaching of Christ.'

One would have supposed that on what would often seem to be the enamelled surface of a boy's heart such words would fall like seeds on pavement. But it was not so. A quarter of a century after I found them again, root, blade, and fruit, in the hearts of two good men who had never forgotten them.

To be able so simply to expound Christ, to make

preaching or teaching be the natural offspring of the life, is work to which many of us are called, even if, in our levity and stupidity, few are chosen. To cast these vital and vitalizing forces into young lives is to make school what Melanchthon called it—'a true workshop of the Holy Ghost.'

It would be no enfeebled or artificial product that we should send out into the corrupted currents of the world; our schools would be weapons as well as nurseries, as full of menace to evil as of friendliness to good.

Many years ago now, Byam Shaw painted a picture of the defeat of the ancient gods: Jupiter and Mars and Venus cowering at last in dismay, hiding in the shelter of the forest, for in the distance they descried their invincible foe, a young man storming up the hill-side, and in his hand, a dread and terrible symbol, he bore a cross of wood. No wonder they quailed—War, and Lust, and Evil Power—before that emblem of sacrifice and mercy. 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith'—that is itself the vehicle of the Cross, and every word written so far must only be regarded as pointing away from ourselves to Christ, in whose power alone can that victory be won. It was not the speed and strength of the youth, it was not the stark outlines of the cross, that terrified the ancient gods; it was that power behind them both of the grace that is strong to save and also firm to destroy.

How, then, to expound Christ, so that that personal contact of mind with mind may presently pass into full communion; that the Jesus of history may be the Christ of experience?

> Jesus, whose lot with us was cast,
> Who saw it out from first to last;
> Patient and fearless, tender, true,
> Carpenter, vagabond, felon, Jew;
> Whose humorous eye took in each phase
> Of full rich life this world displays,

Yet evermore kept fast in view
The far-off goal it leads us to :
Who, as your hour neared, did not fail—
The world's fate trembling in the scale—
With your half-hearted band to dine,
And chat across the bread and wine ;
Then went out firm to face the end
Alone, without a single friend ;
Who felt, as your last words confessed,
Wrung from a proud, unflinching breast
By hours of dull, ignoble pain,
Your whole life's work was fought in vain ;
Would I could win and keep and feel,
That heart of love, that spirit of steel.

These words from *The Spectator* are charged with life and beauty ; but there is more to be longed for, and more to be enjoyed, even than a heart of love and spirit of steel. Youths and maidens are not—any more than adults—all equally sensitive to the presence of Christ and the ministries of the Holy Spirit ; but, without losing our way in a theological quagmire, or thirsting in any desert of philosophy, for the trusting and waiting heart there is a communion to be enjoyed, a joy to be distilled, at least as authentic as any other of the experiences of life.

Many times I have recalled a remark at a meeting of the Women's International Association, ' I correct St. Mark's view of our Lord by my own experience.' That word ' correct ' needed examination and re-examination, but spoken of that Word which abideth for ever, and which is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, it surely is good mysticism and good Methodism, and the teacher who can help to weave that hallowed web, who can lay the foundations of that assurance in a youth's heart, though there be forgetfulness, and stumbles, and darkenings, will be able to promise still nobler fields, still wider knowledge.

From thence far off he unto him did shew
A little path, that was both steepe and long.
Which to a goodly city led his view,
Whose wals and towres were builded high and strong

Of perle and precious stones that earthly tong
  Cannot describe, nor wit of man can tell—
Too high a ditty for my simple song—
  The city of the Great King hight it well
Wherein eternal peace and happiness doth dwell.

XII

METHODISM TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

By Richard Pyke

In order to appreciate the value and power of Methodism to-day, or to do anything more than vaguely speculate on its future usefulness, it is essential that we take pains to assess its quality as a spiritual dynamic.

It is comparatively easy to envisage its far-reaching activities, though even here we should be called upon to look to the ends of the earth ; but both its achievements and potentialities must be attributed to its spiritual force. Not by organization and enterprise, not even by its theological affirmations and passion for social reform, has it wrought the miracles which form the vital part of its history. What has been wrought must be set down to its living union with the power which came upon the waiting disciples at Pentecost. This is a secret which may easily elude the historian. The power operates in a realm where weights and measurements have no place. Statistics do not enshrine, nor even tabulate, what matters most of all.

Methodism is more than a method. We may easily boast of the wrong thing. Human nature does not take kindly to the Cross, and it is a great temptation to search for the secret elsewhere. The success of Methodism, during the wellnigh two hundred years of its history, is one of the most soul-stirring chapters in the whole realm of the Church's spacious and opulent history. It is a record of almost incredible achievement, and it would be ominous could we ever cease to be thrilled by this epic story. When, on that May evening in 1738, John Wesley stepped out of the little room in Aldersgate Street with the inward

kindling and assurance both new and delightful to him, the world could not be aware of what had taken place. No one dreamed that a fire had there and then been lit that would presently set the kingdoms on a blaze ; but so it was. Wesley himself was as unconscious of his high calling as others. He began, little dreaming of the long and difficult path that lay ahead. That path, however, as we look back upon it now, is one of the shining trails of history which has grown bright with the passing of the years. It illustrates with conspicuous beauty the guiding hand of God and the possibilities of a wholly consecrated life.

The story of the birth of Methodism is a familiar one. To-day it claims to have eleven million Church members and probationers, and nearly as many Sunday-school scholars. Others have written of the condition of our country at the time when Bishop Butler may almost be said to have read the burial service over Christianity. The sombre words, 'Christianity is not so much a subject of inquiry,' sound even now like the echoes of a funeral wail coming across the fields of two centuries. In his *Analogy* he did all that argument could do to resuscitate the expiring cause. The Deists were discredited by his calm and resistless logic. The generous breadth and calm impartiality of his arguments baffled his foes, but did not convert them ; nor did his arguments bring life and vigour to the languishing Church. It was John Wesley and his fellow workers who were the instruments of God in effecting this miracle. They did not argue with unbelievers, but, themselves believing with all their hearts and minds, they proclaimed a gospel of forgiveness, of sanctification, of union with Christ, with nothing less than perfection as its goal.

Wesley had himself experienced that change which is the best evidence of Christ's power in the world to-day. The revolution in his own life was as great as in that of the Apostle Paul ; while outwardly, perhaps, there were but few resemblances between the conversion of the apostle of the first century and that of the eighteenth.

Grace, coming as 'sweetness and light,' transformed and inspired Wesley, and sent him forth to 'offer salvation' to 'all sorts and conditions of men.'

Christian theology has always been renewed by a fresh and vital experience of its blessedness. This, more than anything else, effectually interprets 'the deep things of God.' This quickening of the Spirit within the soul was the grand secret of Methodism. In the power and vitality of such origins it grew by day and night. It spread from one end of the land to the other; so that when, a little more than fifty years after its birth, Wesley breathed his last, he left behind a Church of not less than 76,000 members. Nor is this one half the story of its triumphs. It changed the whole complexion of English life. Reforms may have been achieved by the vision of statesmen and the humanitarianism of philanthropists, but it was the gospel preached by Wesley that created and directed those spiritual forces which redeemed England from its moral and spiritual paralysis.

When we begin to discuss the polity of Methodism we recognise that it was not so much an invention, or an imitation, as a growth. There was no nicely laid plan, to which circumstances and societies were compelled to bend.

A study of the sources of the most characteristic and unique features of the Methodist Church recall Cromwell's profound words as vividly as does the life of Wesley itself; 'One never rises so high as when one knows not whither one is going.' Some of these features have almost the appearance of an afterthought. Wesley 'builded better than he knew,' as all great leaders do.

The class meeting itself is perhaps the most shining example of these truisms; and even the Conference began as the simple expedient of its great-hearted leader to confer with his helpers, to co-ordinate and direct their activities, and to rekindle, or fan, the flaming zeal in hearts where perchance the fires had begun to languish.

No one can study the life of Wesley, with its sharp and

sudden decisions, without reflecting on the truth that 'the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.' The constitutions which have elements of the greatest beauty and permanence, even in the government of nations, have frequently been developed by accident, or have been requisitioned by an emergency. An unforeseen necessity dictated a policy which could not be anticipated. The absence of 'statecraft' in the structure of Methodism is the best evidence both of an overruling Providence, and the simple faith of those who were its leaders.

A reference to some of the institutions of Methodism brings somewhat sharply to our consciences the sense of our own shortcomings, and the need in the life of our Church to-day.

We have referred to the class meeting. No one can reflect on this institution without feeling that it has served, and ought still to serve, as a spiritual confessional among 'sons of one family.' It has been a means of grace to countless numbers. We know the story of its origin. Wesley's clear eyes saw from the first that it furnished an ideal method of quickening the hearts of all who gathered together, and of maintaining over them a kindly oversight and discipline.

What the class meeting has meant to Methodism no one can compute. Those who have loved it, have loved it intensely. It met a need of their soul more directly than any other form of worship. There their hearts glowed, there their lips were unsealed. Men who afterwards became national orators learnt to recognize the sound of their own voice in the class meeting. Preachers felt the thrill of public speech for the first time in the little meeting; and men and women who have been prayer leaders of commanding stature prayed first of all in their weekly class. It was there that many a weary soul renewed 'that first fine careless rapture' of conversion. They came perplexed, disheartened, and heavily laden; they left with a song in their hearts. Somehow the fellowship created joy; and so they came to love the

class so fervently that when one meeting had ended they joyfully anticipated the next.

This institution has frequently been the envy of other Churches. Eminent men, like the late Dr. Dale, have openly confessed to a desire for its equivalent within their own communities.

We cannot, however, lose sight of the fact that it is no longer the joy and power in Methodism that it once was. It would be mere affectation to speak of 'attendance at class' as a qualification for Church membership. In large sections of Methodism to-day there are few, if any class meetings at all. In most of our Churches, not more than a small proportion of the members meet weekly. Why this is so it may not be difficult to explain. The dreary platitude which supersedes the fresh and vivid account of what has taken place in the heart; the reluctance to lay bare what is cherished as a secret between the soul and God, whether of struggle or of peace; the dying fires which are being smothered by neglected devotion, or overlaid by worldly pleasures, must all be taken into account. It is to be questioned, also, if prosperity in business which is so often the natural reward of godliness, has done anything to sustain the simple piety and the intense desire for fellowship, which are both essential to the maintenance of the class meeting.

Our account of the causes which have sapped the vigour of this institution makes no pretence to be complete, but any adequate analysis would include a reference to the large number of other meetings which are held within the Church, or on its fringes. The desire to cultivate a knowledge of the literature now so easily accessible, the yearning for some form of effective social redemption, and the fascinations of present-day sport, which throw their spell on the middle-aged as well as the young, all combine to capture those who formerly would have been the supporters of the class meeting.

We doubt, however, if any survey of things as they are, leaves the heart of the sincere Methodist quite happy.

We are all conscious of having lost something we cannot afford to lose. No other institution has supplied what is lacking. Many of our greatest hymns seem to have been written for such a fellowship as this ; and only as hearts melt into a spiritual unity can some of the noblest lines be sung with true appreciation. When the inner story of hope and fear, of temptation and triumph, is told, ' the thoughts that breathe, and words that burn ' become commonplaces of the soul.

Psychologists speak of the ' once-born ' ; and that penetrating theologian, Dr. Forsyth, says that it is the ' once-born ' which constitutes the inner problem of the Church. It may be, however, that such a judgement is harsh and inaccurate. Many of our young people need to be challenged rather than converted. It is not a spiritual revolution that is needed, but personal consecration. They have the love of God in their hearts ; but, instead of being constrained by this love to lives of reckless and glorious adventure for Christ, it is held under the lock and key of a cold prudence, or a full and carefully blended programme of business and pleasure. An experience, such as the class meeting most effectively kindled in the earlier decades of Methodism, is required to capture the eager youth and transform them into enthusiasts for the Kingdom of God.

It was the supreme moment in the history of the human race when ' the Word ' of God was ' made flesh and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth.' The content of that term 'the Word,' employed by the evangelist in speaking of Christ, is rich and deep ; but it certainly includes the thought that, by means of Christ as man, God expressed His thought and purpose. He spake in His Son, and the power of His Word is incalculable. May we not say, therefore, that just as God must speak if man was to be redeemed, so those who are disciples of Him who is ' the Word ' share in the mystery and joy of the redemptive agency, by speaking to one another of the great things God has done for them ? It would do much to link

our young people to the Churches, in bonds of strength and love, if some affectionate and persuasive influence could lead them to frank and simple testimony. 'Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!' is a line of Scripture that admits of an easy and cogent application at this point. Methodism must avoid the cold respectability which seeks 'society' and avoids fellowship. A large part of Methodist history might be expressed in the words of the prophet: 'They that feared the Lord spake often one to another'; and it is devoutly to be wished that some 'wind on the heath' might quicken languid societies, and compel them for very joy to meet and tell one another how great things God has done for them. A piety that is suppressed cannot flourish; and witnessing for Christ is never complete without the spoken word. We have neither the courage nor the inclination to speak of Christ to 'them that are without' if we are silent in the presence of those who love the Lord as we ourselves do.

Here a word may be said too on a kindred weakness of present-day Methodism. We have always encouraged free and spontaneous prayer in public. There is no need to frown upon liturgies. Indeed, there is a definite enrichment of mind, heart, and soul when we avail ourselves, both in private devotions and in public services, of the prayers which came first of all from hearts throbbing with the glow of inspiration, and have since been consecrated by centuries of constant use. It is a pitiful narrowness which would entirely exclude these from our Churches. Many a service held in some small country chapel, and conducted by men who find it far easier to preach than to pray, would be redeemed from harshness and inapt expression, were the preacher to use some of the mighty and moving prayers which are the heritage of the whole Church of Christ.

But what is most to be deplored is the growing disinclination on the part of our young people to engage in public prayer. The decay of the prayer meeting, and the lack of a courageous determination to overcome the

shyness of youth, both contribute to this weakness. Moreover, it may be regarded as the modern form of a reluctance to plunge and take the irrevocable step. The call of our day must have in it the note of a challenge. When this is effective there will undoubtedly be a great readiness to lift up the voice in prayer in the assembly of God's people. We do not suggest any new organization, or clever device ; but we do press for the tender encouragement, and gentle persuasiveness, which would lead the younger portion of our membership to take part more frequently in audible intercession. In every way it would be good for the Church.

If our young people do not pray in public, it will result in greater difficulty in replenishing the ranks of our local preachers. Here, however, we touch upon a theme which cannot be discussed in cold blood.

The history of Methodism presents the appearance of a great mountain range, with half a dozen peaks that transcend in rosy splendour the common level. One of these is the memorable moment when Wesley was persuaded by his mother to listen to Thomas Maxfield. The story is well known. Wesley was horrified to hear that an unordained man had passed across that shadowy line which separates testimony and exposition from preaching. ' Thomas Maxfield has turned preacher ! ' he exclaimed in hot indignation. He hurried back to London to ascertain the facts, and denounce the outrage. It was his wonderful mother who checked his haste, and induced him to judge carefully and patiently what had taken place. ' John,' she said, ' take care what you do with respect to that young man ; for he is as surely called of God as you are. . . . Hear him yourself ! ' Wesley did so. When he had heard Maxfield, his comment was, ' It is the Lord ; let Him do what seemeth Him good.' The response illustrates once again the simplicity which was one of the pillars of Wesley's statesmanship and supremacy ; he never wilfully shut his eyes to the light. He did not escape all the fetters of early prejudice in a moment ;

but the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and circumstances, often carried him whither he would not.

With all his natural determination and almost fierce decision of character, there was always looking out of his eyes the spirit of a little child. Thus it was that he avoided the sin of obstinacy, and bound his helpers to him with hoops of steel.

The work and position of the local preacher to-day requires a much more liberal treatment than our space permits. We love to recall the voice of men who have long been silent. They came forth from field, and factory, and counting house, Sunday by Sunday; and, entering the pulpits of Methodism, preached 'the unsearchable riches of Christ' with power and unction.

Many of them displayed the qualities of the theologian; others were 'born preachers.' The language of the Bible was their native tongue. Great passages were quoted by them, with the accent of knowledge, insight, and conviction. Holy Writ fitted their thought as a glove fits the hand. Moreover, the call to preach woke their intellect. They gathered books, and read them too. Many of them had the true bookman's love of a library.

Some of these preachers were rugged, others refined; some had five talents, others two, and others only one; but to what extent the world has been enriched by their zeal, their faithfulness, and their utterance it is impossible even to estimate.

To-day, however, we are compelled to admit that changes have taken place. Some of these are inevitable. Some may be pleasing; others are, without doubt, regrettable. The pulpit is not the natural objective of eager lads as it was formerly; and here is one of the difficulties which call for more than an article or an occasional allusion in public. Out of the 27,000 sermons which are preached every Sunday in the pulpits of British Methodism it is said that at least 15,000 are preached by laymen.

Nor will any adjustment consequent upon Methodist Union, provide for an adequate supply of ordained

ministers. And remembering the power, insight, and fervour of our local preachers, who desires that it should be so? The local preacher is not a substitute for a minister. 'Thomas Maxfield is as surely called of God to preach as you are!' The local preacher is in daily contact with the struggles, the surprises, the heroism, and the meannesses of the business world; he knows what others feel, as well as what they think. In the market and in the factory, by reason of his 'high calling, of God in Christ Jesus,' he is a very definite and powerful witness. A farmer or a labourer, a draper or a clerk, who is a local preacher is thereby a marked man. Something is expected of him; and it is a duty and a joy to testify to a faithfulness of life which seldom disappoints the expectation.

It will be a task of Methodism 'to-morrow' to find a way by means of which the youth, immersed in studies, and almost tyrannized by scholarships, are gently but firmly led to consider their possibilities and obligations as preachers of the gospel. As it is, many of them, almost without their consent, are carried off into the circles of the Public School and the University, where too often the preaching of laymen is regarded as an eccentricity or an offence against good taste. Many of them also are perplexed by problems of the intellect. Before they have had time to become familiar with the centre, they are hurried off to explore the circumference, with the result that some are for ever alienated from the Church, and others lose precious years embarrassed by doubt. Learning too, tends to shyness concerning religious expression. It is 'bad form' to allude, except in a recondite way, to the vital phases of religious life and thought. It can hardly be a matter for surprise, therefore, that many choice spirits fail to find their way, as we should wish them to do, into our pulpits.

One of the subjects to be considered with patience and knowledge, must be how our own Secondary Schools in particular may be sympathetic auxiliaries of Methodist

sentiment. We have consistently opposed any offence being given to the conscience of publicly paid teachers, by imposing upon them religious requirements to which they do not gladly conform. The State also co-operates to safeguard children from denominational injustice. Here Methodism has always been on the side of simple justice, and for that end is prepared to make a genuine sacrifice. But this does not mean that we are to be aggressively neutral, or shrink, under proper conditions, from the development of religious instincts, and the encouragement of such forms of public utterances as find their supreme and final expression in the pulpits of our Church.

There appears to be a movement towards the rehabilitation of lay preaching; but we shall eagerly anticipate the day when young men and women will more generally recognize the noble opportunities and privileges Methodism offers them through her pulpits. The tribute paid by Professor Thorold Rogers to the local preacher is one which will, in time, apply to the boys and girls who are now the problem of their teachers and the perplexity of the Church. And just as Joseph Arch and George Edwards learnt the art of public speech in the pulpits of Primitive Methodism, so the future leaders of the State may well derive both their gifts of expression and their unquenchable idealism, from speaking to our small congregations concerning Christ and duty. Not that we would for a moment sum up the value of preaching by the extent to which it opens up other fields of public service, where exact and ready speech is essential. The end of preaching is not to pass from the pulpit to the platform. When a man enters the pulpit he has reached the throne. There is no other spot which can surpass this in sublimity. The greatness of the opportunity, the grandeur of the theme, and the possible consequences of preaching, invest it with a splendour which is unique.

It should be possible to do more than has been done to train laymen as preachers. The ordained man is now

required to reach a good standard of education. He then spends three or four years in intensive training, followed by another, and perhaps equal term of studious probation, before he is admitted to the full ministry of the Church. The local preacher, on the other hand, may have to struggle with a neglected or inadequate education, and to struggle yet more strenuously with limitations of time for reading and preparation for the pulpit. Too often, as Sunday approaches, he is conscious of an appointment for which he has no sermon. He is tired when quiet moments are possible, and in the end is tempted to fall back upon a sermon already threadbare.

It should be possible for meetings to be held periodically, designed especially to fertilize the minds of all such busy men, and keep them looking in the right direction for truth and beauty. The general acceptance of the local preacher, and, often enough, the preference given to him, either testifies beyond dispute to his value, or reflects severely either upon the unsuitable training, or the inefficiency of the minister.

It may very well be that the day is at hand when it will not be considered a necessity that the young local preacher should always preach a sermon of conventional duration. We can conceive of a service, so conducted as to enlighten the minds and uplift the hearts of the people, where not only certain of the prayers, but even brief sermons by another preacher might be read. Inelasticity is not peculiar to Methodism ; but wherever it is found it is a perplexity. Perhaps it is a phase of the conservatism without which society, and even civilization, would fall to pieces. Nowhere has inelasticity been more stubborn than in the general refusal to tolerate a service of worship which is not of the conventional type. It is here that courage is required ; but it must never part company with common sense.

The place occupied in Methodism by the local preacher naturally suggests some remarks on the way in which rural districts in particular have profited by his ministry.

Although John Wesley paid as much attention to strategic points as did the Apostle Paul himself, he was always at home with villagers. He was so perfect a gentleman, that the child and the rustic alike were not afraid of him, while the aristocrat never dared to take a liberty with him. Hence, from the first, Methodism which had for its focal points London, Bristol, and Newcastle-on-Tyne, carried the campaign into the villages and hamlets of Northumberland and Durham, of Devon and Cornwall. It is not too much to say that no Church has shown itself quite so flexible in its competence to deal, both with the social needs of the city, and the pagan darkness of the village. It is impossible to emphasize this phase of the Methodist achievement too strongly. To know what the 'Bethels' have meant, and still mean, to the country districts is to discover something concerning which it is easy to be lyrical. A few years ago the little plain building, innocent both of architecture and beauty, was the gathering-place of devout souls thrice a week. Farmers and their workmen, mistresses and maids, the tradesmen and the shopkeeper, met in a fraternity which illustrated democracy at its best. Only a spiritual aristocracy was recognized. Often the outstanding man was a servant, at whose feet the master did not disdain to sit and learn.

The chapels bore such lovely names as 'Providence,' 'Rehoboth,' 'Siloam,' 'Bethesda,' 'Zion,' and 'Bethel.' Healing, vision, and ecstasy even, were common experiences. The little building was indeed, to those who gathered therein, 'the House of God' and the 'Gate of Heaven.'

Here also the change which has transformed every other phase of English life is visible. It could not be otherwise. Change is at work 'in all around,' and village life to-day bears little resemblance to that of fifty years ago. The chapels themselves are now more costly and ornate. To such an extent has this been carried that in many instances it has become a snare. The burden of debt incurred has too often converted the Church into

an agency for raising money, leaving little energy or heart for a more spiritual programme. At the same time the community itself has suffered a loss in tone; the prayer meeting has been neglected, and the revival become obsolete.

The restoration of the country chapel to its proper position as a citadel of spiritual power, is a necessity that demands patient and serious thought. There are few questions indeed which are more urgent than this. Large areas are practically going out of spiritual cultivation. In some districts where formerly two or three ministers found full employment there is no minister at all. A fleeting glimpse of one is occasionally vouchsafed as he hurries along by means of a motor vehicle. It may indeed be questioned whether the motor-car and the bicycle have proved of real advantage to village Methodism.

Meanwhile the standard of physical comfort has been raised; the benefits of education are general, though far from being the unqualified blessing that might have been expected. There is still lacking a corresponding elevation in moral tone. Only the grace of God can resist the world and control the strong passions of human nature. The need to do more for the villages than has yet been done is greater than ever. Though it may not generally be recognized, we are at a crisis in rural life. The coming of the bus and the motor-car has robbed the villages of their former seclusion. The sequestered vales and quiet haunts are rapidly being obliterated. In places where, a few years ago, the presence of a stranger would provoke general comment, the roads now teem with people from all parts of the land. It ought to be possible, in a united Methodism, for every group of four or five villages to have their pastor. He should regard it as a privilege to visit the homes of the sick and the aged, and to know the children by name. The disinclination to a country circuit is now as distressing as it is disastrous, and Methodism is already paying a heavy price for its failure to cultivate these rich areas.

There must be no hesitation to suggest boldly and definitely, that small and competing societies in the same village shall merge. Not even tradition, sentiment, or prejudice should suffice to perpetuate the futile divisions which we have all grown to deplore. When persuasion, patience, and prayer alike fail to effect a union, risks will have to be run. Divisions which were born of an intolerance that no longer exists should not be allowed to continue. The approaches, however, should not be made in the form of a threat, but persuasively, and as a measure suggested by common sense and grace.

Perhaps the policy of the future will be to form large circuits, or missions, in rural areas, with a commanding personality as superintendent. There might be a free interchange among the ministers in pulpit service, while each has his group of parishes, whose spiritual friend and adviser he would rejoice to be.

When we pass from village to the town and city, the problem is a different one. The whole complex of social ills forms an obstacle and a challenge. Unemployment, which is practically unknown in the village, often robs the town dweller of either the inclination, or the means, to attend a place of worship. The slum-dweller, too, cannot be expected to rise above an environment which is a disgrace to civilization. Overcrowding menaces morality, damages health, and weakens mental fibre. Evils such as drinking and gambling offer a tempting escape from the dull misery in which thousands are condemned to spend their days and nights.

Our chapels may be situated in the midst of these dreary districts, but few tasks are more difficult than to persuade the people to enter them. Even the children are no longer expected by their parents to attend the Sunday school. The second generation of non-church-goers are satisfied when the children play on Sunday afternoons in the alleys, or possibly some adjacent park. The little Methodist communities which still survive in such localities are largely supported by faithful and generous

souls who reside elsewhere. The congregation, in the vivid phrase of a minister, is 'hand-picked.'

We do not undervalue the ministry of these Churches; to do so would be blind folly and base ingratitude. But the fact that we only touch the fringe of the squalor and need, cannot be denied.

More than a passing comment should be devoted to the effect of drink in these neighbourhoods where the people can least afford the waste. The Rev. E. Benson Perkins has recently shown, that in one of the poorest areas in Birmingham, the average family of five persons spends no less than £1 a week on drink. This accords with Dr. Alfred Salter's statement that Bermondsey spends more on strong drink than on bread, milk, rates, and rent all added together. The economic waste, however, is but a fraction of the evil. If we are to take full account of the disastrous consequences, we must note also the deadening effect upon morals and mind, the ravages made upon the health of the body, the privation suffered by the children, and the general disintegration of all that has been compacted by civilization. These facts with others that cannot here be reviewed, go far to alienate the working classes from our places of worship. So completely have many of the people become strangers to the chapel in their own street, that they would almost as soon think of entering Buckingham Palace, as walk easily and naturally into the sanctuary.

We dare not deny that we ourselves may have, willingly or unwillingly, done something to create this coldness or fear. We have no sympathy with sweeping denunciations of the pride, the class-distinction, and the smug respectability of the churchgoer; but it is not possible to exempt ourselves from a measure of responsibility. We believe, however, that, speaking generally, those against whom such indictments are levelled would hail with satisfaction the coming of the people, and do all within their power to make them welcome.

In many instances chapels remain which were built

when a thriving population surrounded them. Those who gave on so generous a scale for their erection may have been ambitious, or even vain ; but no one can withhold an admiring tribute from greathearts who desired that the house of God should be spacious and beautiful. But now these churches are many of them marooned among warehouses, or are in the heart of a slum. The man in his badly-worn suit feels ill at ease in them.

The creation of what are called ' Central Halls ' has shown, however, that the people will assemble on Sunday evenings for a religious service. It is objected that these halls attract by hiding worship as effectually as possible. The charge is a foolish one. Worship may be as real, and as uplifting, when the hymn has a chorus, and is led by an orchestra, as when the most unexceptionable words are sung to the severer accompaniment of an organ. What cannot be denied is that crowds *can* be attracted ; amid many considerations that are not encouraging here is one of heartening significance. The more searching and evangelical the sermon, the more it is appreciated, and the more immediate is the response. Even if we regard the Central Hall as a kind of half-way house back to the Church, it should at least be valued in the same way as we should value the elementary school in our desire that every one might have a university education.

Not that such an illustration exactly points to the true significance of the Central Hall. Our most thoughtful preachers are welcomed, and those with experience would say that ' strong meat ' is as acceptable there as in the ordinary church. The masses may have drifted ; but Central Halls prove that they are not beyond reach. Nor should it be forgotten that these halls are centres of social schemes, the ministrations of which reach the homes of the aged poor, the sick, the unfortunate, and the moral derelict. They sustain missionary work in our own country, where paganism and piety so strangely mingle.

There would appear to be an opportunity for a closer sympathy between hall and church. It would indeed be

regrettable were the ordinary Methodist church to look upon the adjacent hall with a frown ; or the hall to undervalue the work done in many a small and struggling church.

Whether the main difficulty of the city is in its centre or its suburbs, it would be hard to say. Any one who approaches a typical English city to-day may know that he is drawing near by the large number of new houses, whose chief virtue is that they are not packed together, as in the inner belt of the city. Whole featureless townships have grown up within a few years. The shopkeeper has kept pace with the development, but for obvious reasons the Church has found it impossible to do so. The population is, in many instances, almost entirely a non-church going one. Many of the parents for some reason desire that their children should attend a Sunday school, but they are content themselves to lounge in the garden, or take advantage of the bus and the train for an aimless picnic. The difficulties which arise from people of refinement, finding themselves next door to persons who have still the habits of the slum, are not for us to overcome. That they exist all with experience recognize ; and the fretfulness of this ungraded population is a new feature of city life.

It is not yet apparent how we may most directly and effectively reach these new districts ; and yet the call is urgent. There is grave fear of large areas lapsing into unrelieved godlessness. Spiritual darkness threatens to envelop and mock the newness of these ' garden cities.' Our own belief is that here, as well as in the inner areas, there is a sphere for sisters of the people. They perhaps, better than any one else, find access to the homes, and are welcomed among the sick and distressed. Women, in the loneliness and isolation of their new surroundings, eagerly admit a kindly lady. There is, however, no royal road to redemption ; we must be willing to work hard for a long time without a great harvest. The lapse is grave, and the Church must be ready to ' toil on and in her toil

rejoice' ; unless, indeed, there should sweep over our land a great breath of spiritual quickening which, like the winds of heaven, cannot be commanded and cannot be controlled.

The task before us is one which can neither be undertaken, nor contemplated apart from economic considerations, and particularly the disturbing features of personal wealth and poverty. It has sometimes been charged against the Evangelical Revival that too much attention was given to individual and subjective salvation, and that there was not sufficient regard for the unshrinking ethical standards of the New Testament. There was nothing to sustain this accusation in Wesley's own life and preaching. He was relentless in his insistence upon the ethical implications of religion. In one small volume of twenty-four sermons, preached when he was over seventy, there are discourses on Patience, Dress, the Education of Children, Visiting the Sick, Redeeming Time, and Obedience to Parents. But perhaps the most searching sermon of all is one on ' The Danger of Riches.' The proposition which he elaborates in this discourse is that ' whoever has sufficient food to eat, and raiment to put on, with a place where to lay his head, and something over, is rich.' He was a shrewd observer ; he saw that riches first beget, and then confirm, the desire for ease ; and ease was an indulgence which Wesley spurned as a deadly sin. ' Am I not in my seventy-eighth year ? ' he asks. ' Yet, by the grace of God, I do not slacken my pace yet. Neither would you if you were a poor man still.'

The severe simplicity of Wesley has proved too much for many of his followers. We cannot, however, ignore the great liberality of Methodists as a whole. Often enough, with slender resources, they have built churches, sustained foreign missions, promoted philanthropies, and maintained other costly enterprises with unremitting generosity.

Many have grown wealthy in our ranks. The probity with which their business was conducted, the temperance

which was a part of their religion, and the clear-headedness which is the reward of sobriety, combined to remunerate their diligence. We have not always retained these prosperous men, and far too frequently their children have left us for another Church, or none.

But there is no ground to complain of the general loyalty of the successful business man. It may indeed be questioned if any Church has ever had a larger proportion of its members who have consecrated their wealth and made it the servant of the Kingdom of God. In many instances the scale of giving would have met with the unqualified approval of Wesley himself. Nor can it be denied that these princely givers have been among the happiest of men. After all, loyalty to the Church to which one owes most of all, and the dedication of every form of power to noble ends, can scarcely fail to give a peace which society can neither give nor take away.

It is the business of the statesman and the economist to deal with wealth and poverty as phases of modern life, but Methodists can continue, and must continue, to show how wealth can be nobly exploited for noble ends. 'The poor, and him that hath no helper,' is more than an Old Testament line of poetry; it describes far too many of the people in city, slum, and suburb alike, and these must not be forgotten or neglected.

Methodism must continue to exemplify a religion which takes account of the body as the temple of the Holy Ghost. While disdaining a piety which simply offers heaven to people whose earthly conditions make life a hell, we know well enough that it is the sin of the human heart which is the prime creator of man's misery; and we know too, that sin can only be dealt with at the roots, by the grace and power of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus there must continue to be an emphatic recognition of the fact of conversion. If Methodism ceases to expect and preach for conversions, she will have turned her back upon her founder, her history, and her heritage.

It is felt by men who have a godly jealousy for the

Church, that the training of our ministry may be too exclusively devoted to problems of the mind. Questions which tax the intellect may be so relentlessly pressed that the evangelical passion is overlaid. A man may leave college with a clearer knowledge of biblical criticism and philosophy, but with all the fires damped down. Against this peril none strive more zealously than those whose responsibility it is to teach those who are preparing for the ministry.

Open-air preaching is perhaps the best of all methods for bringing the preacher back to the power and glory of the Cross. When Wesley faced thousands of listening men and women in the open air, he saw clearly that what they needed most of all was a divine hand to lift and lead them. Hence he went up and down the country 'offering salvation.'

The evangelical preacher is, after all, the only true Methodist preacher. Is there any experience of grace that would do so much just now to refresh our Churches, and pour fresh life into all our veins as a great revival? It would solve problems of finance, and sanctify and sweeten relationships which at present leave something to be desired. If we witnessed conversions on a large scale, we should all become singers. An evangelical campaign may be the only way of saving both our own souls and the souls of those who hear us.

Standing, then, upon the vantage-ground which these considerations supply, we look ahead. The moral and spiritual condition of England, its deliberate rejection of Church fellowship, its conversion of the Lord's Day to a day of pleasure, its industrial chafing, its problems of slum, intemperance, and immorality, and, farther afield, the nations which know not the gospel, drive us either to despair, or to a simple faith in God. We are not sufficient for these things; but 'He that is for us is more than all that can be against us.' The experience of God's strength and grace saves us from all disheartenment.

The Church is the Body of Christ, and through that

Body, the living and ever-victorious Christ will achieve His purposes. If we withdraw our eyes and heart from Him, we are as plants cut at the root.

But what of the future? Are we to cherish as the goal of all our work and prayer a united Methodism, striving side by side with other Churches, with such measure of goodwill and co-operation as imperfect sympathies make possible? There is a grander vision which rises before our eyes. The Christians of India and other Eastern lands compel us to think of, and pray for, a Church, one, holy, and world-wide.

The divisions in the Church are more than 'unhappy'; they are tragic. They are the fruit of human infirmity and spiritual misfortune. Perverseness and blundering, intolerance and pride, have combined to tear the Church in pieces. The sections have hardened into communities with differences in polity, in theology, and in spiritual emphasis.

Within the past few years, however, a change has come into the hearts of those who lead. Rome, it is true, outwardly maintains that she is the one Holy Catholic Church. Nor can it be easy for a Church which affirms infallibility to relinquish this claim. Yet even in the Roman Church there are devout souls who are not happy as they recall her history and contemplate the manifest signs of God's grace and favour in other Churches.

To what extent the leaven is working we cannot tell. But elsewhere, the spirit of unity finds frequent expression. It is recognized that divisions had their origin in circumstances and moods of which no one can glory. These distinctions, which are more or less dimly appreciated by the outsider in our own country, are a source of perplexity and a veritable stumbling-block in the mission field. It appears to many of our missionaries as almost a sin against the Holy Ghost to attempt to graft denominational divisions upon the Church in India, in China, and in Japan.

It is now recognized, in the light of Christian charity,

that there are no qualities of spiritual distinction and value in any one of the Churches, which cannot be preserved, and given a richer setting in a one and undivided Church. Only such a Church can set forth in completeness and beauty, the truth as it is in Jesus Christ.

Happily, Methodism has reached the day when her divisions have been healed for the most part in all other lands, and are about to be ended in our own. We unite, not simply because it is prudent and seemly, not simply because it will make for efficiency but because it is a spiritual necessity. We do not rejoice in our own divisions, nor can we find it in our heart to be severe concerning those who were in any way responsible for them; but the Spirit who worketh in the general heart and mind of the Churches, points to union as according to the mind which was in Christ Jesus.

Lovers of the Church as the organ of Christ's thought and activity can never rest until each and all its sections are brought into happy and loving relationships. It is not necessary to describe, or even to envisage, a Church with a common policy and a single human head; but the day should not be distant when proud and untenable claims to a spiritual prerogative will no longer be urged; and the various communities gratefully and openly shall confess that Christ who is all in all, is the One Head of the Church, and in whom 'all we are brethren.'

Methodism has a history, a unity, and a spiritual momentum which give promise of continual development and great usefulness. For evangelistic work at home, both in city and village, for social enterprise, and the redemption of our country from the moral paralysis that threatens many of her areas, for the cultivation of the intellect, and the furtherance of learning, for prosecuting foreign missions, with all their beneficent and varied activities, no Church is better equipped. But the prayer has gone up to God the Father from Christ the Son, while here on earth, 'that they all may be one.' Whatever that prayer may mean, however it may be interpreted, it

does eliminate all readiness to unchurch a fellow Christian, all disposition to exaggerate the value of some quality which others are supposed not to possess; and most certainly it makes it impossible to refuse whole-hearted recognition of the good in others because they company not with us. The prayer of Christ is both a prophecy and a promise; nor can we rest until the broken and scattered Church shall be gathered into a happy and holy fellowship, to the glory of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

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